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Slaughter was Commenced: A Study of American Revolutionary War Massacres

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Abstract

This thesis examines massacres that were committed during the American Revolutionary War, seeking to recontextualise their importance within the broader frame of the study of violence while building a narrative that holds that the American Revolution, though broadly conceived in ideological terms, was both driven and decided by acts of extreme violence on the battlefield – in short, that wartime massacres shaped military outcomes to a degree that has been hitherto underappreciated. Late twentieth and early twenty-first-century studies have sought to highlight the central role that violence played during the revolutionary war, helping to bring an end to the sanitised nineteenth century view of a revolution driven by principle rather than force (see Gelb, Hoock, Breen et all). Despite this there has been no complete study of the many massacres committed by both sides during the war, or an attempt to identify the broader role they played in the conflict's outcome.

Massacres frequently emphasised both the superior combat proficiencies of Crown Forces and the superior propaganda capabilities of the Patriots. Unable to respond militarily to small-scale British successes especially in the years 1777 and 1778, the Patriots instead created a highly successful atrocity narrative – nascent and growing since the Boston Massacre of 1770 – that offset the damage done on the battlefield. Massacres came to define entire theatres of the war, such as the western frontier or the south from 1780 onwards.

Modern efforts such as Holger Hoock's *Scars of Independence* (2018) have used occasional accounts of massacre to reinforce various points about revolutionary violence, but have failed to offer a comprehensive analysis of massacres throughout the conflict or assessed how these events had a decisive impact on the war. This thesis will seek to rectify that. Beginning with the Boston shootings of 1770 and closing with an assessment of the effect that massacres had on the Treaty of Paris, this thesis uses massacres as the

central narrative focus for a reassessment of the course of the entire conflict, ultimately showing that many of them were pivotal events and not mere by-products of the wider conflict or footnotes in later histories of the revolution.

Lay Summary

During the American Revolutionary War, massacres of soldiers and civilians were common events that had a powerful impact on the progress of the conflict. Both sides conducted massacres, and such acts often came to define parts of the war. They influenced the strategies of senior leaders and had a great impact on the attitudes of combatants. Revolutionary forces were especially skilled at using news of massacres to demonise their enemies and motivate support for the revolution. Britain and her supporters, meanwhile, often under-appreciated the impact of massacres. Because of these reasons the massacres of the American Revolution played a key role in the outcome of the war, a fact that remains largely unacknowledged today. Although modern historians are increasingly highlighting the importance of violence in general during the American Revolution, until specific massacres are treated as subjects worthy of study in their own right our understanding of the conflict will remain incomplete.

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If a stop cannot be put to these massacres, the country will be depopulated in a few months more.[1]

– General Nathanael Greene to Colonel William Davies,
May 23 1781.

[1] Nathanael Greene in *The Life of Nathanael Greene, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution, Volume 3*, ed. George Washington Greene (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), 227.

Introduction: Defining a Massacre

Soon after the end of the American Revolutionary War an outspoken British opponent of the conflict, Thomas Mullett, met with George Washington. Whilst being entertained at Mount Vernon, Mullett proposed to Washington that he ought to write a full history of the war, in much the same way as Caesar had once recounted his campaigns in Gaul. Washington's answer, according to Mullett, was unequivocal. 'But Sir, *I know* the atrocities committed on both sides have been so great and so many, that they cannot be faithfully recorded, and had better be buried with oblivion.'[1]

We cannot be certain whether the quote, recorded by Mullett's biographer four decades after the fact, is wholly accurate. But regardless of whether Washington said it or not, it serves as a reminder that wars are not bloodless. Despite nineteenth and early twentieth-century efforts to sanitise the violence of the American Revolution, a student of the period does not have to go far before they will inevitably trip over one of the darker events Washington hinted at. Atrocities in general and massacres in particular had an impact on the war that remains heavily under-appreciated, even after recent efforts to better understand the revolution's violence. Massacres provided high points for the Patriot propaganda efforts throughout the war, emphasise the inherent violence of British imperial response to the rebellion, and came to define British officers operating far out of their depth in the southern colonies towards the war's end. Taken together, massacres played a disproportionately important role in setting the tone for different phases of the conflict. For the purpose of this study, these phases are defined as the shift to open warfare in 1775, a period of further escalation in violence and military aggression from the years 1776 to 1778 and a total degeneration in terms of both social order and strategic objectives precipitated and fuelled by massacres in 1780 and 1781. In every theatre in British North America, in

[1] John Evans, 'Memoirs of Mr Thomas Mullett,' in *The Gentleman's Magazine Volume 85*, ed. Sylvanus Urban (London: Nichols, Son and Bentley, 1815), 84.

every year of the war, massacres defined the ongoing course of the conflict, ultimately proving that wartime massacres vitally shaped military outcomes.

While recent studies have sought to put the full gamut of violence back into the American Revolution, these undertakings have often relegated the extreme violence of massed killings such as Fort Griswold in 1781 or Gnadenhutten in 1782 to brief descriptions that help emphasise wider violence but stop short of considering the profound impact of acts of massacre on the course of the war, the following peace negotiations or the legacy that extended well into the nineteenth century. Massacres are, in short, underappreciated as decisive acts of war during the revolution. Without studying them we are still failing to appreciate the true, violent nature of the American Revolution and the notably brutal war that defined it.

The American Revolution and the Study of Violence

In the introduction to his multi-volume *A History of the United States*, George Bancroft wrote that:

> Much error had become incorporated with American history… the early history was often written with a carelessness which seized on rumors and vague assertion which satisfied prejudice by wanton perversion, and which, where materials were not at hand, substituted the inferences of the writers for authenticated facts. These early books have ever since been cited as authorities, and the errors, sometimes repeated even by considerate writers, whose distrust was not excited, have acquired a prescriptive right to a place in the annals of America.[2]

At the time Bancroft was addressing the fact that much of the history being written in America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was plagiarised, and 'so general was the practice that one is led to the conclusion that it was the rule rather than the exception.'[3] Taken out of context,

[2] George Bancroft, *A History of the United States, from the Discovery of the American Continent to the Present Time*, *Volume 1* (Boston: Charles Bowen, 1834), vi.
[3] R. Kent Newmyer, 'Charles Stedman's History of the American War' in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Jul., 1958), 924.

however, Bancroft's opening passage could have been written by a number of authors in the late twentieth or early twenty-first century. Since the Bicentennial, and particularly in the past decade, an ever-growing number of studies have emerged that seek to reassess the nature of America's founding. In the late 1970s John W. Shy wrote – in a book that at the time did much to remind Americans of the chaotic violence of their origins – about a new generation of historians seeking to answer questions about 'slavery, poverty, violence, Indian relations, and the place of women' during the period of the revolution.[4]

Shy's predicted reassessment of America's founding conflict – its combatants, contexts and legacies – has now been underway for over a decade, widening the field of study and emphasising narratives that would have been unfamiliar or of little interest to the custodians of the revolution in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Books such as Jill Lepore's *These Truths* (2018), Gerald Horne's *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America* (2014) and Douglas R. Egerton's *Death or Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (2009) have helped emphasise the experiences of enslaved peoples and the racial aspect that underpinned and, at times, defined the revolution. Maya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles* (2011) reframes the war from the perspective of the Loyalist struggle. Jeanne Munn Bracken's *Women in the American Revolution* (2009) and Barbara B. Oberg's *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World* (2019) have brought the study of gender during the revolution into the twenty-first century. Patrick Griffin's *American Leviathan* (2008) and Ethan A. Schmidt's *Native Americans in the American Revolution: How the War Divided, Devastated and Transformed the Early American World* (2014) both emphasise the plight of Native American peoples in the face of the powerful expansionism that was evidenced by white colonists even during the war. Andrew O'Shaughnessy's *The Men Who Lost America* (2014) and Brendan Simms'

[4] John W. Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 13.

Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire (2007) have helped to properly place the revolution within its British imperial context, while the efforts and experiences of the British Army are better understood today thanks to books such as Matthew H. Spring's *With Zeal and with Bayonets Only* (2012), Don Hagist's *British Soldiers, American War* (2012) and Mark Urban's *Fusiliers* (2007).

Shy's prediction regarding a new wave of revolutionary histories was based on the belief that 'the most recent generation of historians' would challenge older narratives through the 'exploration of some of the disturbing sides of life in eighteenth century America.'[5] And while many of the previously mentioned books do feature the concept of violence as a specific subject previously mentioned by Shy, the study of violence as a central driving force during the Revolutionary War remains in its infancy. The diversification of studies has slowly been establishing a broad narrative of violence that challenges the fallacious belief that the American Revolution was less prone to bloodshed than other revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, emphasising the extent of that misconception is still the central premise of only a few works.

Gordon S. Wood's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* provides a useful illustration of the studies that, even in the early nineties, were still backing the concept of a revolution denuded of popular violence and unfettered imperial aggression. Considered at the time – though not without controversy – as a great reassessment of the nature of the revolutionary struggle, Wood challenged the idea that the conflict was a conservative one and sought to remind readers of the powerful social upheaval the revolution created. Yet, while he reignited the radical thought that affected so many Americans and their institutions during the period, he stopped short of emphasising the violence that accompanied it, instead

[5] Ibid.

preferring the older, established view of a struggle that was radical in conception, but less so in execution:

> If we measure the radicalism of revolutions by the degree of social misery or the economic deprivation suffered, or by the number of people killed or manor houses burned, then this conventional emphasis on the conservatism of the American Revolution becomes true enough.[6]

For Wood there were 'no peasant uprisings, no jacqueries, no burning of chateaux, no storming of prisons'– the revolution was revolutionary in its thoughts, in its new institutions, in its social change, but not in its violence. [7] This in spite of destitute Ulster Scots frontiersmen who fought with such ferocity against the Crown, or the thousands homesteads and plantations put to the torch by marauding warbands, or the thousands who languished in royal prison hulks, or the firing of royal soldiers into a crowd of civilians, or the Committees of Safety that arrested and examined their fellow countrymen's loyalties to the revolutionary cause. While Wood overcomes his target – the staid, nineteenth century view of a conservative revolution – he does so in a way that isolates the ideology from the existence of the bloody war that gave birth to it. In this sense it remains a part of a legacy of sanitised retellings that have existed almost since the closing years of the revolution itself.

An early contrasting view is best emphasised by Normal Gelb's 1984 book *Less than Glory*. In it he made the claim that 'most popular accounts of the Revolution have been cosily laundered or tidied up' and that 'its countless moments of heroism, virtue and sacrifice were accompanied by equally countless acts of cruelty, selfishness, venality, small-mindedness and oppression… like all wars, it was a shambles.'[8] At the time Gelb described *Less than Glory* as the revisionist's view of the revolution, and though it

[6] Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992), 5.
[7] Ibid, 3.
[8] Norman Gelb, *Less than Glory: A Revisionist's View of the American Revolution* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 12 – 14.

certainly leaned into that claim, it also provided an insight into the shifting priorities of the field of study. Gelb's conception of the revolution was of a struggle based on principals, but very much driven by violence and ultimately overwhelmed by its own discordance. While commentators once had little time for such a view, the opposing theory promoted by Wood is now the one being challenged. Violence is coming to be viewed for what it was – a defining aspect of the revolution, rather than a by-product that can be largely discarded by those who would rather emphasises a traditional founding father ideology.

Newer Revolutionary War literature is helping to emphasise this shift. In 2002 Sarah J. Purcell's *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* assessed the impact of violence and memory on the formation and growth of the early United States. The book shows how 'the violence of the Revolutionary War had an indelible effect on the politics of the American Revolution' and how 'Americans created a set of stories that sought to give meaning to the real violence of war.'[9] However, it does not, by its own admission, set out to actively investigate individual acts of extreme wartime violence and use them for the purposes of broader study. The book concerns itself with memory, legacy and how violence affected political and cultural institutions, rather than immediate cause and effect of violence – and massacres – on the course of the war.

A collection of essays, brought together and published in 2016 under the title *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy: The Politics of Violence in the American Revolutionary Era*, provides a wider and even more recent view of violence in both an eighteenth century American and transatlantic setting. Among the diverse themes and methodologies employed, it is worth quoting Andrew Cayton's attempt to define just what violence means in an eighteenth-century context:

[9] Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 2.

> The *Oxford English Dictionary's* leading definitions of violence highlight a sensibility that emerged in the long eighteenth century… to do violence to another human being is to violate them… Violence, in sum, is a form of power that negates liberty and denies another person's humanity by abandoning persuasion for force, consent for coercion. In eighteenth-century language, violence amounted to an artificial interference with nature.[10]

As we shall see, defining potentially nebulous words like "violence," "atrocity" and "massacre" in the context of the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world is not an easy process. It is important to note that during his study Cayton assesses how eighteenth-century Britons viewed and describe their own violence, highlighting the powerful juxtaposition between a violent society that also attempted to cast itself as, ultimately, a non-violent "civilising" force. The importance of studying acts of violence in the language of those who experienced it – whether victim, perpetrator, or onlooker – will be addressed in the following sections.

Other modern works deal with violence either as a central theme, or a topic of great importance, though none address the very tangible and defining effect such violence had on the course of the Revolutionary War. Timothy H. Breen's 2010 book *American Insurgents, American Patriots*, shows the ground-up anger that fuelled the revolution in the early years of the 1770s. The revolution no longer revolved around eloquent documents signed by staid men in periwigs, but focussed on impassioned local gatherings and, at times, mob rule. Other studies have focussed on specific aspects of the revolution's grim realities, like Robert Watson's work on the brutalities inflicted on Patriot prisoners in *The Ghost Ship of Brooklyn* (2017). On a broader scale, Alan Taylor's latest grand work, *American Revolutions: A Continental History* (2017) reminds us of the difficulties of the revolutionary

[10] Andrew Cayton, '"The Constant Snare of the Fear of Man" – Authority and Violence in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic' in *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy: The Politics of Violence in the American Revolutionary Era*, eds. Patrick Griffin, Robert G. Ingram, Peter S. Onuf, Brian Schoen (Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 21.

struggle across generations, helping to emphasise both the constraints upon, and the potential of, a new nation formed through violent conflict and aggressive expansionism. It builds on two previous books, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772 – 1832* (2014) and *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (2007), both of which underscore the problematic nature of removing violent narratives from a nation that wrestled with the justifying use of force from the beginning. Taylor's work dispenses with the elegance of the original American Experiment and the straight path drawn by some between 1776 and eventual full emancipation, and instead we are presented with all of the initial difficulties and wrong turns of a revolution and an early republic that was initially built up by violent expansion and violent institutions.

Research Aims, Findings, and *Scars of Independence*

Though the disturbing aspects of America's birth mentioned by Shy are indeed coming under increasing scrutiny, a modern study of violence as a narrative frame for the fuller revolutionary experience appeared most recently in 2018, with the publication of Holger Hoock's *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth*. Hoock's work sets out to cover the breadth of the pain caused by the conflict that engulfed North America, from the suffering of civilians and the brutalities committed by British regular forces to the cruelties inflicted on Loyalists and the merciless bloodshed and town-burning of the war on the frontier. Hoock writes about a number of instances of massacre during the war, and uses them to highlight his central argument – that the revolution was a chaotic and violent affair that, at times, spun wholly out of the control of its actors and instigators. Hoock's interest in massacres is centred on his interest in the revolution's violence in general, and therefore he does not treat the study of massacres as an objective in its own right. Because of this, his writing does not amount to a comprehensive account of massacres throughout the revolutionary war, and at times fails to appreciate how the conflict itself turned on incidents of massacre (and the propaganda which such massacres fuelled). This thesis seeks to redress that failing. In

Scars of Independence, massacres are just another form of violence explored by Hoock and used to support his central thesis – that the American Revolution was a fraught and pained experience. This research treats massacres as the central subject and seeks to show that they were an engine of revolutionary violence that is worthy of independent analysis.

During the course of the war acts of massacre perpetrated by Crown Forces became the central theme of a Patriot "atrocity narrative", an aspect explored by authors such as Hoock, who also highlights its work emphasising the mistreatment of civilians and prisoners, the destruction of property and the incitement of Native Americans and enslaved peoples to violence against white settlers. The atrocity narrative was a system of propaganda that was utilised to offset the small-scale tactical damage done by British victories, with wide-ranging military and political strategic successes. It was an 'ethico-polemical war that shadowed the war on America's battlefields' and ultimately lead to advantages for the Patriots ranging from motivating recruitment to legitimising the revolutionary struggle against imperial aggression in the minds of onlookers, both in America and abroad.[11]

While *Scars of Independence* and similar works (*Jus In Bello*, 2015 and *Mangled Bodies*, 2016) explore the range of atrocities harnessed for their atrocity narrative by the Patriots, Hoock's studies fail to identify massacres as the single most important acts of violence within this narrative, ones which defined previously-mentioned phases of the war and fatally undermined British efforts at either reconciliation, or the restoration of what Crown Forces viewed as law and order. Most importantly, Hoock's work fails to (or more accurately, doesn't wish to) address massacres in their context as decisive military acts. Like other studies concerned more with charting political or societal impact during the Revolutionary period, *Scars of Independence* doesn't provide a particularly robust military overview of the conflict and doesn't concern itself with comparing and contrasting multiple cases of

[11] Holger Hoock, '*Jus In Bello*, Rape and the British Army in the American Revolutionary War' in *Journal of Military Ethics*, 14:1 (2015), 88.

massacre. Because of this it fails to promote an understanding of just how far the Revolutionary War was driven and defined by massacres.

The question therefore remains; how did wartime massacres shape military outcomes? In answering this it will be important not only to compare separate cases of massacre and the varied, often divergent accounts that detail them, but also deal with topics as wide-ranging as the Patriot atrocity narrative, British command and control in the field, attitudes towards what was termed "Indian War" on the frontier, the nature of slave society in the south, the links between race-based antagonism and popular fears of massacre, the impact of reports of massacre on wartime recruitment and many more. All of these sub-topic questions will be listed and addressed in the relevant chapters, while the methodology used to answer them will be discussed in the following section. The research findings conclude that in spite of the secondary importance given to them in wider studies of violence, like Hoock's, massacres were decisive in shaping the progress of the Revolutionary War, evidencing a cycle of aggression that dragged in both sides and ultimately emphasising a conflict that was built upon and defined by acts of extreme violence in a military setting.

A dedicated study of massacres not only helps to properly emphasise the vital role massacres played during the revolution while also deconstructing the older, pre-existing framework of restraint and bloodlessness that has often been used to discuss the revolution. Documenting and attempting to explain the Revolutionary War's massacres helps us to overcome two centuries' historiographical hindsight that has sought to sterilise and sanitise the story of American's birth, leaving behind only a glorified concept of acceptable violence. Shy put it succinctly when he wrote that 'the ink was barely dry on the Treaty of Paris before myth and reality about the Revolutionary War were becoming entwined… Much about the event called the Revolutionary War had been very painful and was unpleasant to remember; only the outcome was unqualifiedly pleasant; so memory, as

ever, began to play tricks with the event.'[12] Certainly, it is important to acknowledge that studies of the revolution have now moved on from the likes of Robert Leckie's *George Washington's War*, of great battles and great men and the overwrought, exceptionalist belief in 'that spirit of independence so fierce that it was an absolutely new phenomenon in the history of mankind.'[13] Rather, we are increasingly coming to acknowledge that 'instead of staring the realities of death and warfare in the face, Americans sometimes diverted their eyes to focus on a glorified version of violence that was at once more patriotic and more palatable.'[14] Addressing this continues the work of Hoock, Griffin, Purcell and others by reemphasising the violence at the heart of the revolutionary struggle, the violence either overlooked or carefully set aside by the likes of Wood.

A study of the revolution's many "unpalatable" moments is also valuable in expanding the field of massacre studies, a small but growing subset of books and articles that examine the cause and effect of extreme violence on cultures and societies throughout history. Massacres, as we shall see when we come to the matter of definitions, remain separate from events such as genocide or general atrocities, and their causes and outcomes can provide insight into the political and sociological events that contextualise them.

The Massacre in History (1999) is one of the few works to date which attempts to use the topic of massacres as a vehicle for broader study. Complied by Mark Levene, it presents a series of essays that explore the cause and effect of a wide variety of historical cases of massacre upon wider culture, politics, society and religion. Perhaps most importantly, in the book's introduction Levene reminds us that massacres can provide researchers with a microcosm of the nature of historical study itself, with the emphasis not 'on what 'actually' happened so much as how it was remembered.'[15] Because of

[12] Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, 26.
[13] Robert Leckie, *George Washington's War: The Saga of the American Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 10.
[14] Purcell, *Sealed with Blood*, 12.
[15] Mark Levene, 'Introduction' in *The Massacre in History*, eds. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (Berghahn Books: New York, 1999), 3.

this, ‘massacre can help give a shape to history… history, after all, involves empirical observation of societies more often than not in conflict and crisis… ensuing tensions, frequently leading to violence cannot be ignored or sidestepped; on the contrary they are absolutely integral to understanding how history “works.”’[16]

Massacre Methodology

The next five chapters will do as Levene suggests and seek to provide a shape that further reframes the study the American Revolutionary War as an conflict both grounded and driven by violence, particularly acts of massacre. Each chapter uses one or two primary cases of massacre as its locus, exploring how they impacted the wider war and looking at what specific events can tell us about the driving force that not only violence, but specifically acts of massacre, represented during the revolution. While the eight headline engagements – Boston in 1770, Lexington, Paoli and Tappan, Cherry Valley and Gnadenhutten, Waxhaws and Haw River – provide the initial focus for each section, they also act as a vehicle to discuss numerous other counts of massacre during the war, such as Fort Griswold, Crooked Billet, Drake’s Farm, Wyoming, Hayes’ Station, Little Egg Harbor and more. The chapters act as an arc of progression for the war itself, exploring a number of themes relating to the central premise that massacres played a decisive role in three main phases of the conflict. As well as examining the Boston massacre of 1770, the first chapter will assess the legacy of massacre that was familiar to American colonists through preceding conflicts, and establish the racial hierarchy that shaped concepts of “whiteness” and “savagery” in relation to acts of massacre. The second chapter, based on the battle – or massacre – of Lexington, also establishes the disparities between how massacres are documented during and after wartime. The third chapter, centred on the Paoli and Baylor massacres, charts the increase in aggression in the fighting waged by both sides between the years 1776 to

[16] Ibid, 3 – 4.

1778. The particular focus is on regular on regular violence – the massacres that occurred between Continental and British Army soldiers while in close proximity to one another during the occupation of Philadelphia and New York. The fourth chapter focuses on the frontier war particularly between the years 1778 and 1783, examining how concepts of massacre differed between the west and other theatres of the conflict, and how acts of massacre were capable of blurring lines usually drawn along older racial enmities. The final chapter deals with the southern colonies in the years 1780 to 1782, and explains how a cycle of massacres came to totally define both Britain's southern strategy and the overall outcome of the war.

The majority of the massacres examined during this thesis have received little individual scholarly attention. The killings such as the ones which occurred at Fort Griswold or Haw River (both in 1781), have had no major independent treatment. Others, like the Waxhaws massacre or the night-time engagement at Paoli, have received only one major, dedicated analytic work (in this case Jim Piecuch's *The Blood Be Upon Your Head*, 2010 and Thomas J. McGuire's *Battle of Paoli: The Revolutionary War "Massacre" Near Philadelphia*, 2000). More commonly, such events attract a great deal of passing mention in popular histories and broader studies of the war, but far less detailed assessment, be it through the examination of primary sources, studies of the wider impact or simply a general appreciation of the exceptional violence that made such massacres commonplace during the war.

In order to fully rectify this the use of primary evidence is key. Given the contested nature of many of the events described, eyewitness statements and testimonies are of great interest. As we shall see, Patriot authorities often sought out and documented eyewitness accounts as part of a strategy to mitigate the military effects of massacres by turning them into propaganda coups. While there is obviously a danger of inherent bias, these depositions – collected after engagements such as Lexington or Tappan, and indeed the Boston massacre – often twinned with later pension statements in interesting

ways, at times corroborating facts, and on other occasions providing very different views.

Along with depositions and pension records, correspondence can provide an insightful understanding of attitudes towards violence and massacre, particularly among the officers on both sides. Following many cases of massacre, commanders would frequently exchange accusations, which sometimes devolved into full-blown diatribes – see, for example, Horatio Gates to John Burgoyne during the Saratoga campaign, Adam Stephen to William Erskine following Drake's Farm or Elijah Hand to Charles Mawhood after Hancock's Bridge. Along with these are letters exchanged between leaders and their subordinates, which can give an important view of how ranking officers sought to mitigate or utilise massacres. Nathanael Greene's worries to his colonels about the frequency of the massacres taking place in the south in 1781, or George Washington's instructions regarding the treatment of British Indian agent William Hamilton offer a perspective that is removed from the more public image projected to superiors, opponents or to the popular press, and can help to form an understanding of the more genuine and pressing attitudes towards massacre during the war.

Contemporary media, especially the printed sources of the colonial press, also provide insights into the wider impact of massacres. Of especial interest are disparities between primary accounts and the media reports which followed, and the divergent claims made by British and colonial publications. These were often at the sharp end of the propaganda struggle that continued throughout the war, with Patriot authorities relying on the well-established North American print media to accentuate the propaganda fallout from massacres, as well as seeking to use the British press (at times very open to Whiggish narratives) to put pressure on the governing ministry.

These sources have been accessed either through archival visits to the British National Archives, the British Library and the National Records of Scotland, or original source reprints of collected works, whether in specific

collections such as various volumes of *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* (reprinted in paperback in 2015), the *Cornwallis Papers* (2010 edition), or more general compositions of Revolutionary War sources, like *The Spirit of Seventy-six: The Story of the American Revolution as Told by Participants* (1968). They have been further supplemented by online databases, such as the Founders Online section of the National Archives, which includes the digitised writings and correspondence of a large number of leading Patriots, and the Southern Campaigns Revolutionary War Pension Statements & Rosters catalogue of revwarapps.org, an underused resource that compiles all pension data from southern combatants over the course of the revolution.

Though analysis and cross-examination of primary evidence drives the thesis, assessment of secondary sources is important in establishing the legacy of the Revolutionary War's massacres. Late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century histories of the revolution are important in understanding how Americans were able to shed the violence of the conflict while still building on the foundational qualities of many of the combatants. These books include Benson J. Lossing's *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (1850), Bancroft's aforementioned *History of the United States* (1834) and George Trevelyan's *The American Revolution* (1899). Some nineteenth-century works also include valuable reprints of primary sources, like Lyman C. Draper's *King's Mountain and its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780* (1881) or archival collections such as Henry Howe's *Historical Collections of Virginia* (1845) and Samuel Hazard's collected volumes of the *Pennsylvania Archives* (1853). Though these do have to be treated with care, the sources they include are still often valuable.

As previously mentioned, this thesis is not just a military study of the American Revolution, but a study of the specific impact of massacres on the military and political dynamics of the conflict. When examining how easy it is to shy away from the ugly, oft-partisan nature of the "Massacrology," Levene lays down a challenge to historians that find the topic unpalatable – 'is it not

the correct thing to do to dispense with the mythic transformation that the "massacre" has undergone to return to as thorough and comprehensive an investigation as is possible of the event itself?'[17] Doing so speaks to the realities of historical study across all disciplines, and provides greater clarity amidst our ongoing reassessment of the revolution's complexities.

Defining Massacrology

Most dedicated studies of massacre open by attempting to clarify the parameters of just what the word itself means, and what that in turn means for the study in question. Here definitions need to be carefully considered against the general backdrop of the study of violence, an aspect that defined the American Revolution far beyond recorded cases of battlefield atrocities, massacres or massed killings.

Plainly put, 'all massacre is violence, but not all violence is massacre' – the use of British prison hulks where thousands of Patriot prisoners languished in terrible conditions can rightly be described as an atrocity, while numerous other acts of violence such as the burning of homes and the mistreatment of civilians, especially women, were as reprehensible as they were commonplace.[18] It is impossible to look at incidents of military massacre in the Revolution without mentioning such activities, but assessing them in full in their own right is beyond the scope of this study.

How, though, do we come to a working definition of massacre? In attempting to build a framework to allow us to study specific cases of massacre, it is important to first take stock of previous attempts do so in other conflicts. As Philip G. Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan make clear, until recently the study of massacres as a topic in and of itself has been overshadowed by the broader study of genocides. While understandable, such a connection is unhelpful insomuch as it is entirely possible for massacres to occur in a non-genocidal

[17] Levene, 'Introduction' in *The Massacre in History*, 3.
[18] Ibid, 5.

setting. Even in academia it is common for scholars not heavily invested in the subject to fail to 'differentiate between massacre, mass killing and genocide.'[19] Similarly, studies analysing twentieth-century massacres, such as Brenda K. Uekert's *Rivers of Blood*, typically define their terms using parameters created in the late nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, engaging with concepts such as human rights and war crimes. While the basic ideology behind such ideas can be found throughout history – soldiers during the Revolution could look to either the British Articles of War of 1765, the American Articles of War of 1775, or popular theorists such Emer de Vattel – any work seeking to analyse massacres in a pre-twentieth-century context should steer clear of twentieth-century definitions of the word. This therefore rules out neat classifications such as the one provided by the Guatemala Human Rights Commission, which states that massacres are 'extrajudicial executions' specifically of three or more people.[20]

How, then, have historians of earlier periods defined the idea of massacre? In his analysis of bloodshed during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms, Will Coster assigned three criteria to the meaning of massacre. Firstly, killings had to be conducted 'not by individuals, but by groups.'[21] Secondly, there had to be a degree of 'superior, even overwhelming, force,' exerted in concentration by the perpetrators.[22] Lastly, and perhaps most interestingly, Coster holds that the final criteria is fulfilled when the bloodshed is 'outside the normal moral bounds of the society witnessing it.'[23]

Especially in the belief that a massacre must be the work of multiple perpetrators, Coster's criteria do not seem entirely satisfactory, but his ideas do point in the right direction. Levene and Roberts agree that massacres are

[19] Philip G. Dwyer and Ryan Lyndall, 'The Massacre in History' in *Theatres of Violence: Massacres, Mass Killing and Atrocity Throughout History*, eds. Philip G. Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan (Berghahn Books: New York, 2012), xii.
[20] Brenda K. Uekert, *Rivers of Blood: A Comparative Study of Government Massacres* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1995), 6.
[21] Will Coster, 'Massacre and Codes of Conduct in the English Civil War' in *The Massacre in History*, eds. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (Berghahn Books: New York, 1999), 90.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

best defined when 'people lacking in self-defence, at least at that moment, are killed - usually by another group... who have the physical means, the power, with which to undertake the killing without physical danger to themselves.'[24] Such an event also involves a 'limited, though not defined geographical arena, as well as a limited, though again not clearly defined time period.'[25] This second definition helps rule out incidents such as the use of nuclear bombs, or the Stalinist purges, which Dwyer and Ryan agree are better defined as ‘mass killings’ rather than specific massacres.[26] Thanks to these descriptions it is possible to reach an imprecise consensus that an event must match a broad set of criteria before it can be considered a massacre.

If finding a definition is difficult, it is even harder when considering the term "atrocity," the term used by Washington when talking with Thomas Mullett, a word so often used alongside, and sometimes conflated with, massacre. If dedicated academic efforts to define what David El Kenz has described as "massacrology" are scarce, attempts to categorise what we might mean specifically by the word "atrocity" are even harder to come by. Dwyer and Ryan offer probably the best working definition for physical atrocities, specifically that they were 'exactions committed by perpetrators against the body of a victim, living or dead, such as rape and torture or the removal of body parts.'[27] This of course excludes the whole spectrum of non-physical acts people instinctively think of as atrocities – forcing families from their homes into an inimical wilderness, for example, or the deliberate withholding of medical aid from the sick and injured, both of which occurred during the American Revolution. While such acts certainly contain elements of physicality, they are not as obvious as the laying on of hands. The Oxford English Dictionary merely describes "atrocity" as meaning 'an extremely wicked or cruel act, typically one involving physical violence or injury' that

[24] Levene, ‘Introduction’ in *The Massacre in History*, 5.
[25] Ibid, 6.
[26] Dwyer and Ryan, ‘The Massacre in History’ in *Theatres of Violence*, xvi.
[27] Ibid, xii.

evolved from the sixteenth century onwards.[28] Even more so than massacre, the idea of atrocity is left wide open to personal interpretation, and thus defies a hard and fast definition.

This leaves us with two problems. Firstly, though a massacre can be constructed by adding together certain sets of criteria - it requires multiple victims, it must be carried out in a specific locale, the victims must be largely defenceless at the time of death - it defies precise numerical qualifications insomuch as it seems impossible to agree on the threshold number of victims and perpetrators, or to impose a set amount of time over which it must occur, or a precise physical boundary within which it must take place. The second problem – with the definition of atrocity – is even more pronounced. At a basic level the word is defined simply as cruelty. Without a workable definition for either phrase it is difficult to know how to approach acts of massacre and atrocity during American Revolution.

Hoock himself wrestles with the terminology used for Revolutionary War killings, writing that a massacre was usually defined as 'the killing, and often especially cruel and wanton killing, and often the mutilation, of several or many unresisting or defenceless human beings by, typically, an overwhelming force, in an action that is specific to a particular place as well as limited in time.'[29] Even this broad a definition is not perfect by eighteenth century standards – in Hoock's own work he describes a Patriot minister, John Rosburgh, who was apprehended and killed by Hessians on January 2 1777. Despite being taken and killed alone, those relating his death describe him as having been 'massacred,' in defiance of the usual requirement for multiple victims.[30]

[28] *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd Edition, ed. Angus Stevenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 101.
[29] Holger Hoock, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (New York: Crown, 2017), 497.
[30] Ibid, 159.

In his work on the Boston massacre, Eric Hinderaker also points out this eighteenth-century capacity for describing even singular deaths as massacres, thus intensely broadening the potential scope of study;

> According to the Oxford English Dictionary, its [massacre's] primary definition in the eighteenth century was "the indiscriminate and brutal slaughter of people or (less commonly) animals; carnage, butchery, slaughter in numbers; an instance of this." In modern usage, a massacre seems to require a high body count. But in the early modern sense of the word, the "cruel and atrocious murder of a single individual" could constitute a massacre. It was identifiable by the spirit in which it was undertaken, its wantonness and brutality. To invoke the term was to make a rhetorical claim with political significance.[31]

Dwyer and Ryan at least partially accept this same problem in *The Massacre and History* by admitting that 'it is not uncommon, in other words, for historians to refer to the killing of one or two people as massacre.'[32] John Docker's article 'The Origins of Massacres' adds that 'the term massacre then encompasses within itself the possibility of both event and process or sequence,' one which could reasonably include even a single victim. Docker also hypothesises that the word's nebulous origins may be found in sixteenth-century France, where 'the term massacre was thus once used for a butcher's chopping block' before it became closely associated in the English language with the infamous Saint Bartholomew's Day killings in 1572.[33] Ultimately there is no generally accepted answer as to how many deaths constitute a massacre, bringing us no closer to finding an accurate definition to apply to acts of massacre during the Revolutionary period.

A Workable Definition

The solution to the difficulty of definition lies in the parameters initially set by Coster. His final requirement was that a massacre counted as such when

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[31] Eric Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 2 – 3.
[32] Dwyer Ryan, 'The Massacre and History' in *Theatres of Violence*, xiii.
[33] John Docker, 'The Origins of Massacres' in *Theatres of Violence: Massacre, Mass Killing, and Atrocity Throughout History*, eds. Philip G. Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan (New York: Berhahn Books, 2012), 4 – 5.

bloodshed was considered excessive by the society or period in which the massacre took place. At a stroke, this removes the problem of conflating modern and legal definitions of war crimes and human rights violations with earlier events that do not fit neatly into a twentieth or twenty-first-century worldview. It also instantly removes the obfuscating debate about time, location and casualty numbers that ultimately distracts from, rather then helps construct, a working definition of massacre.

There was hardly a single incident of extreme violence during the Revolutionary War that was acknowledged by both sides as a massacre. Contesting narratives, though part of what makes such events worthy of study in the first place, further muddy attempts at a concrete definition that can be applied in all cases. The only viable option is to reframe the question being asked. Following Coster's ideas, we should not concern ourselves with being able to define a massacre with modern terminology and ideas. It is better to simply ask whether one side or another considered a particular event to be a massacre or not. If the answer is yes, then that event deserves a place in this study. As we shall see, during the Revolutionary War there were a great many acts considered to be a militarily sound operations by one side, and acts of barbaric, excessive violence by the other. The technicalities of definition will not be allowed to preclude the analysis of any of them.

Such a methodology is supported not just by Coster, but also by works like those of Andrew Cayton. In his aforementioned study of transatlantic colonial violence, Cayton emphasises the importance of understanding the subject matter in eighteenth century terminology, and reiterating the fact that their notions of "violence" – both as a strict definition and as a broader concept – differed in important particulars from the modern usage. The same will be attempted here with the eighteenth-century concept of "massacre." Utilising modern definitions or applying strict criteria will simply not suffice.

By basing this study on acts considered to have been massacres during the conflict in question, we also resolve the inability to decide on the correct application of the term "atrocity." Simply put, if an event in the past was

hailed by its contemporaries as a massacre or an atrocity, it should be analysed as such. With regards to the Revolutionary War, this starts to give us a workable criteria, for there were many events described as such by either or both sides.

Ultimately then, massacres are best defined by the societies within which they occur. When at least part the chosen society – in this case the broad transatlantic British and British-colonial North American society of the 1770s – describes an event as a massacre it can be considered worthy of inclusion in this study. No further criteria is required, and attempting to artificially enforce parameters such as necessary body count or geographic locale misses the point of the study – this work intends to explore and understand both the immediate military impact and the legacies of acts of massacre in the American Revolution, not debate the exact validity of massacre claims using ahistoric definitions.

Eighteenth Century Conceptions of Massacre

If massacres should be defined by the societies within which they occur, when considering occurrences of massacre during the American Revolution we must first look at the state of the Anglo-American society in the mid to late eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary of the English Language* defines the phrase "massacre" with four words, 'Butchery; indiscriminate destruction' and 'murder.'[34] It is also listed as part of the definition for ‘destruction’ alongside the word 'murder.' Slaughter, meanwhile, is listed as 'massacre; destruction by the sword.'[35] It also defines "atrocity" as meaning 'horrible wickedness; excess of wickedness.'[36] A later edition pinpoints two specific historical cases of what it defines as massacre - 'the great massacre of Protestants in Paris' in 1572 and 'the massacre in Ireland, when 40,000 English Protestants were killed' in 1641.[37] Such definitions,

[34] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Volume 2, 6th Edition (London: 1755), 92.
[35] Ibid, 670.
[36] Ibid, 194.
[37] Samuel Johnson, *Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language in Miniature*, ed. William Brown (London: J. Bumpus, 1823), 344.

while certainly not as fixed in the universal consciousness as the dictionary definitions of today, can certainly be considered as representative of the mid to late eighteenth century understanding of the words.

Looking beyond his dictionary at the world of Samuel Johnson and his perception of massacre in North America is also useful. Johnson himself was certainly not ashamed to wield language that invoked his own definition of the word. As far as American Whigs were concerned he would have made an excellent colonial caricature of a brutal British officer - according to his biographer, James Boswell, he once said 'I am willing to love all mankind, *except an American*.'[38] He 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter; calling them rascals - robbers - pirates; and exclaiming, he'd burn and destroy them.'[39] Of course, Johnson was a marked opponent of the colonial drive for independence, and famously once said 'how is it we hear the loudest *yelps* for liberty among the drivers of negroes?'[40]

Johnson's personal feelings are made clearer still by the tone he uses when writing on subjects relating to America; he frequently references slaughter and barbarism. In *Indian's Speech to his Countrymen*, Johnson's eighty-first essay among the collection of papers known as *The Idler*, he writes from the perspective of Native Americans viewing the British Army during the Seven Years War, and speaks tellingly of their belief that colonial settlers 'ranged over the continent, slaughtering in their rage those that resisted, and those that submitted, in their mirth.'[41] The essay's unstinting criticism of colonial America is not so much representative of Johnson's understanding of the plight of Native Americans, nor necessarily an attempted critique of the British empire, but is rather indicative of the man's intense dislike for American colonists. Through Johnson we are offered an example, in 1759, of

[38] James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, Volume 3* (London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1859), 195.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid, 136
[41] Samuel Johnson, *The Works of Samuel Johnson, Volume 7*, ed. Arthur Murphey (London: J. Hadden, 1820), 324.

a British view of North America as a place wracked by violence, where bloodshed was inherent.

In the 20th of his *Idler* essays, Johnson imagines himself as a historian viewing the Seven Years War a century after its conclusion. The acts of the colonists are described as those of 'barbarians' who conducted themselves 'with a degree of outrageous cruelty... a trader always makes war with the cruelty of a pirate.'[42] In Johnson's descriptions of all the barbarisms of the colonial experiment, from his critique of slave-owner hypocrisy to the ruthlessness of the wars practiced against the Natives, we see a more general belief that the North American societies were more violent than those found in Europe.

Contemporary dictionaries and their authors were not the only means of insight into how eighteenth-century Britons and their colonial cousins viewed massacres, or violence in general. Much of the period's debate was rooted in the work of seventeenth-century philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, and focussed on the idea of just war. One particular contemporary, Emer de Vattel, was widely read in British North America. Both Franklin and Washington were students of his most influential work, *The Law of Nations*, which is frequently cited as having had a degree of influence over the drafting of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. While covering a broad range of moral topics, de Vattel brought a new perspective to the secular, natural rights ideology behind the Just War theory that eighteenth-century Americans would have been familiar with. His thinking revolved around the concept that war could be 'undertaken with vicious motives but with just causes.' Despite the fact that when 'war had begun he was anxious to moderate its conduct,' de Vattel promoted the idea that everyone 'not incapable of handling arms, or supporting the fatigues of war... was subject to becoming a soldier.'[43] Although he introduced nuances to this concept –

[42] Ibid, 77.
[43] Tyler Rauert, 'Early Modern Perspectives on Western Just War Thought' in *The Prism of Just War: Asian and Western Perspectives on the Legitimate Use of Military Force*, ed. Howard M. Hensel (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 101.

specific groups such as women, the old and the young could not be targeted – in general his writings promoted the idea that all able-bodied males were potential combatants, and that an entire nation's strength should be pitched against its opposition. Concerning surrendering combatants, de Vattel wrote that surrendering soldiers should always be given quarter, and if the heat of battle inclined men to murder it was the duty of their officers to restrain them – 'if sometimes in the heat of action the soldier refuses to give quarter, it is always contrary to the inclination of the officers, who eagerly interpose to save the lives of such enemies as have laid down their arms.' De Vattel considered a refusal of quarter permissible only if the enemy 'has been guilty of some enormous breach of the law of nations… this refusal of quarter is no natural consequence of war, but a punishment for his crime.'[44] In general, the laws of nature and of war subscribed to by many eighteenth-century combatants and commentators were 'Vattelian rules [which] encompassed the prohibition of unlawful acts, for example, the massacre of a surrendered enemy.'[45]

Thanks to the definitions of Johnson and the writings of de Vattel we can understand broadly what Washington would have meant to his contemporaries when he spoke of the many terrible – yet thankfully forgotten – atrocities of the Revolutionary War; horrible and excessive wickedness, and the unrestrained damage caused when peoples throw themselves wholly into a conflict. Through these criteria any study of the revolution's massacres has a wide range of events to choose from. Defining the fine line between genuine massacres and the products of hysteria or propaganda becomes a worthwhile objective in its own right.

Understanding the eighteenth-century worldview of massacres both as a concept and as literal events is vital if workable study parameters are to be created. While contemporary definitions and theory-based critical thought go some way to improving our knowledge of how British and North American

[44] Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations: Or, Principles of the Law of Nature Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), 348.
[45] Hoock, '*Jus In Bello*' in *Journal of Military Ethics*, 76.

colonists viewed massacres, perhaps the clearest understanding can be gleaned from the attitudes towards contemporary or recent acts of extreme violence. While the likes of Johnson's examples of the 1572 Saint Bartholomew's Day killings or the 1641 massacres in Ireland give us a view of British (and Protestant) ideas of historical massacre, there were more current cases in the 1760s and 70s that coloured British and colonial attitudes to extreme violence. The first chapter in particular will look at events such as the 1769 Spittalfields shootings or the Saint George's Field massacre of 1768, as well as examining how fears over massacre were an ever-present spectre in colonial America. From the highly publicised events following the surrender of Fort William Henry in 1757 to the first Jamestown massacre of 1622, racial prejudices and past antagonisms between colonists and Native Americans not only influenced the colonial understanding of extreme violence and warfare but helped promote the importance of "the massacre" as an emotive subject during Revolutionary War discourse.

The progression of a North American understanding of massacre and the impact the Revolutionary War had upon it can be charted in part by the changing definitions of the word. The popularity of dictionaries continued to rise rapidly during the late eighteenth century, culminating most notably in Noah Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*. It offers a more expansive set of definitions than the earlier works of Johnson. Its description of "massacre" is lengthy – according to Webster a massacre is:

> The murder of an individual, or the slaughter of numbers of human beings, with circumstances of cruelty... It differs from assassination, which is a private killing... If a soldier kills a man in his own defense, it is a lawful act; it is killing, and it is slaughter, but it is not a massacre. Whereas, if a soldier kills an enemy after he has surrendered, it is a massacre, a killing without necessity, often without authority, contrary to the usages of nations, and of course with cruelty. The practice of killing prisoners, even when authorized by the commander, is properly massacre; as the authority given proceeds from cruelty.[46]

[46] Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, MA: G. and C. Merriam, 1854), 697.

Here we see Webster deliberately wrestling with the very issues more modern commentators have faced in their efforts to form a single, comprehensive definition of massacre. He harks back to Johnson with his repeated references to the cruelty which must be inherent in the act, as well as later referencing the massacres of Protestants in France. He goes much further, however, by choosing to single out the specific cases of soldiers killing ‘without necessity’ as massacre. It is also interesting that he clarifies that the killing of prisoners even with the authority of superior officers must also be considered as a massacre.

Webster was seventeen when the revolution broke out, and twenty-five when it finished. He served in the Connecticut Militia. While not otherwise militarily involved in the conflict, he undoubtably experienced the Revolutionary War intimately. It is impossible to know how much the conflict affected his later writings, but even if there was no connection it is interesting to note the extension of the analysis of "massacre" in the seventy-three years between Johnson's and Webster's publications, an analysis that must have had some basis in the bloodshed of the revolution. Here we see the impact that massacres had written into the public consciousness. It was this understanding that would define how massacres were both conducted and then described, and how a later historiography of the war developed that sought to minimise them – in the spirit of Washington's plea to Thomas Mullett, to forever forget the Revolution's most bloody and violent moments.

Chapter One: Boston

No event during the eighteenth century is more regularly associated with the word massacre than the shootings in Boston on March 5 1770. The deaths of five colonial civilians and the wounding of six others by British soldiers became a rallying cry for the revolutionary elements in New England, and was used as an example of the brutality of British rule and the barbarism of the British Army. The word massacre itself was applied by commentators quickly after the incident, something that was in itself noteworthy – as Eric Hinderaker points out, 'simply to call the Boston shootings a "massacre" was to make a claim for the event's significance.'[1] Contesting narratives, not only between the British Crown and the radicals but also between mob actors and well-off leaders of the movement, highlighted colonial unrest and provided an insight into both the power and the subjectivity of massacre claims. This chapter will assess the Boston shootings before looking at how massacres were viewed more widely in the colonies during the period, laying a foundation for later discussion about the intersection of race, propaganda and violence.

The British Occupation of Boston

The speed and intensity of the response to the events of March 5 is indicative of the situation in Boston in 1770. On September 28 1768 a fleet of Royal Navy ships and over two regiments of British Army regulars put into the town's harbour. An officer met representatives of the town on Castle Island the next morning where he 'acquainted them in a very genteel Manner that he was ordered to quarter one of the Regiments at Boston; that he hoped he was going among Friends and that his Men would on their Parts behave as such.'[2] When advised that some of his men may be quartered in public houses, he added that 'he

[1] Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre*, 2.
[2] Bernard, Francis, 'To the Earl of Hillsborough Boston October 1 1768' in *The Papers of Francis Bernard, Volume 5: 1768 – 1769*, ed. Colin Nicolson (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2015), 63.

could not be answerable for the good Order of his Men, which it would be impossible to preserve if they were intermixed with the Townspeople and separated from their Officers.'[3]

The fleet subsequently 'ranged themselves as if for a siege' while the infantry – the 14th and 29th regiments and two companies of the 59th, plus an artillery detachment – landed on Boston harbour's Long Wharf and marched into town 'with drums beating, fifes playing, and flags streaming.'[4]

Deployed initially to uphold the British government's unpopular Townshend Acts and support the activities of Massachusetts's Crown officials, the presence of the garrison had a profoundly negative impact on colonial attitudes towards the mother country, causing unease throughout New England and providing ammunition for a number of increasingly vocal Whig radicals. Though British troops were generally not quartered en-masse upon the people of Boston and did not conduct punitive raids or snatch operations on known dissenters, they did participate in a cycle of low-level antagonization with colonists, who believed their presence was at best unwarranted, and at worst an infringement on their liberty. The census of 1765 put Boston's population at 15,520 inhabitants, around 4,000 of whom were adult males, all occupying a town with a circumference of about four miles. The British forces that arrived in 1768 totalled roughly 2,000 men, and that was without counting the regiment's camp followers and the crews of the Royal Navy ships stationed in Boston harbour. Consequently, during the British occupation around one in every three men in the town were soldiers.[5]

Unsurprisingly, the military presence caused trouble. Led by Samuel Adams, anonymous Whiggish and radical writers began to keep a

[3] Ibid.
[4] Richard Archer, *As If an Enemy's Country: The British Occupation of Boston and the Origins of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), xiv.
[5] Ibid, xvi.

record of British misdemeanours in Boston they variously entitled the *Journal of Occurrences*, the *Journal of the Times* and the *Journal of the Transactions in Boston*.[6] Printed in the *New York Journal*, such accounts set out to 'portray all things British as the embodiment of evil,'[7] delivering a steady stream of reports for over a year that claimed the British 'assaulted men and raped women with frequency.' [8]

Unsurprisingly the stories related by Adams and his co-agitators were largely unverifiable, 'for in these reports of daily outrages there was rarely a name or address... dates for the incidents gave a false appearance of documentation... the *Journal* was first published outside of Boston, where readers had no way to check the accounts... the source was usually hearsay.'[9] But whether or not most of the stories related were true or not ultimately did not matter. The Journal 'put revolutionary ideology into language ordinary people could understand, distilling the grand notions of democratic revolution into dramatic stories of corruption and abuse of power.'[10]

North America proved to be fertile ground for such ideological work, for 'every week stories of Boston under military rule appeared in papers from Salem, Massachusetts Bay, to Savannah, Georgia.'[11] New England itself was the perfect hub for literary opposition to the British government, given that New Englanders were 'the originators of popular literature - the first to produce literature designed for mass distribution to

[6] David A. Copeland, *The Media's Role in Defining the Nation: The Active Voice* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 31.
[7] Carol Sue Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press: The Promise of Independence* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), xiv.
[8] Martin J. Manning, 'Journal of Occurrences' in *Encyclopaedia of Media and Propaganda in Wartime America, Volume 1*, eds. Martin J. Manning and Clarence R. Wyatt (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LCC, 2011), 72.
[9] Thomas C. Leonard, *The Power of the Press: The Birth of American Political Reporting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 39.
[10] James L. Aucoin, *The Evolution of American Investigative Journalism* (Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 22.
[11] Leonard, *The Power of the Press*, 42.

an American audience, on American presses.'[12] Indignation spread from the already well-established papers of the northern colonies via a rapidly growing press network to all corners of British North America. Such networks would play a vital role in elevating the importance of the Boston shootings, and laid the foundations for the atrocity narrative that ultimately fuelled Patriot propaganda during the revolution.

After two years of military occupation, clashes between British soldiers and Bostonians became increasingly violent. On February 22 1770 an angry crowd attacked the house of a British customs officer, Ebenezer Richardson, who had earlier defended the shop of a Loyalist merchant from a similar mob. Richardson shot several members of the crowd, including eleven-year-old Christopher Seider, who died that evening from his injuries.[13] Boston reacted with outrage. In an act that would echo the fallout from the March 5 shootings, Samuel Adams arranged a large and elaborate funeral for Seider, including obituaries and poetry that lambasted his killer. The *Boston Gazette* printed a damning article on February 22 describing the 'barbarous Murder' and stating that the blood of Seider 'crieth for Vengeance, like the Blood of righteous *Abel*.'[14] The radicals understood that they required the use of fatal force by the occupying army in order to fully establish themselves as the victims, and thus claim unequivocal moral superiority. Seider's death meant that 'Adams and the Sons [of Liberty] could transform hitherto anonymous accidental victims into martyrs for freedom.'[15]

The situation continued to deteriorate, with more fight and street brawls between soldiers and town residents. Eventually on the evening of March 5 1770, an argument broke out between a lone sentry and passers-by that soon attracted a gathering crowd. A small group of soldiers led by Captain

[12] Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, 'Introduction' in *So Dreadful a Judgement: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676 - 1677*, eds. Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom (Middletown CT, Weslyan Univeristy Press, 1978), 39 - 40.
[13] Zobel, *The Boston Massacre*, 110.
[14] Neil Longley York, *The Boston Massacre a History with Documents (*London: Routledge, 2010), 85 – 86.
[15] Ibid, 181.

Thomas Preston arrived in support of their comrade. The crowd became abusive and physically aggressive. ‘A heedless mob, playing with legal fire; a rash band of frightened soldiers, confused by the noise, distracted and provoked by the swearing and taunting in front of them' – the situation was ripe for disaster. [16] Eventually, and contrary to Preston’s orders, the soldiers opened fire. Within days, the event was being framed by the radical Sons of Liberty as a massacre.

New England’s agitators made full use of the media networks and means of communication already available to them. A series of rhyming couplets produced anonymously and entitled *A Verse Occasioned by the late horrid Massacre in King-Street* described how the soldiers had been brutalising the Boston inhabitants prior to the shooting, which it described as the ‘sad massacre.’[17] Various newspapers also damned the actions of the soldiers - the *Boston Gazette* falsely reported that Preston had deliberately ordered his men to fire and claimed that the soldiers 'showed a degree of cruelty unknown to British troops'.[18] The *Essex Gazette* told of how the regulars had been 'abusing the people' for weeks before they opened fire 'in a most wanton, cruel and cowardly manner' and 'without the least warning of their intention.'[19]

The five victims were buried with elaborate ceremony, while one of the injured boys, Christopher Monk, was paraded before the townsfolk. Entirely aware of the incident’s potential, radical New Englanders anticipated a government cover-up and rushed to assemble as many damning eyewitness testimonials as possible. There proved to be no shortage of primary accounts that used the phrase ‘massacre’ in their description of events – Charlotte

[16] Ibid, 197.
[17] Massachusetts Historical Society Collections Online, *A Verse Occasioned by the late horrid Massacre in King-Street*, https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=324&mode=large&img_step=1&&pid=2, accessed July 19 2018.
[18] 'The Boston Gazette and Country Journal,' in *Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the Rowdy Beginnings of American Journalism* by Eric Burns (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006), 151.
[19] *The Essex Gazette*, Volume 2, Number 86, Salem MA, March 20th 1770, 2.

Bourgate called the shootings the ‘horrid massacre,’[20] John Wilme ‘the late massacre,’[21] John Gray ‘the massacre of Monday evening’[22] and David Cockran also ‘the late massacre.’[23] In total ninety-six people gave their version of events, of which 'ninety-four placed the blame on the soldiers, or other government officials.'[24] These were collated in the tellingly named *Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre*, edited by a number of prominent Bostonian Whigs. As we shall see, such efforts to supplement the massacre account with what appeared to be thorough judicial process and fact-finding was a technique that was employed repeatedly by the Patriots throughout the Revolutionary War.

The collected testimonies were disseminated throughout the colonies and used as proof positive that the British government was an institution no longer worthy of loyalty or respect. The pamphlets themselves were impounded prior to the trials of the soldiers responsible for the shootings, but not before they had reached England. This achieved the radicals' secondary aim - to counter the depositions collected by the authorities. When it came to harnessing the press and affecting public opinion, the Loyalists 'for once, beat them [the Whigs] to the punch.'[25] Following the shootings Lieutenant Colonel William Dalrymple, commander of the British garrison in Boston, had ordered his subordinates to bring together their own eyewitness statements exonerating the actions of the soldiers. Within eleven days, thirty-one pro-government testimonies had been compiled and smuggled off to England, collected under the title of *A Fair Account of the Late Unhappy Disturbance at Boston in New England*. The collection actively acknowledged the efforts of

[20] Charlotte Bourgate, ‘No. 58’ in *History of the Boston Massacre, March 5th, 1770* by Frederic Kidder (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1870), 82.
[21] John, Wilme ‘No. 1’ in *History of the Boston Massacre, March 5th, 1770* by Frederic Kidder (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1870), 47.
[22] John Grey, ‘No. 9’ in *History of the Boston Massacre, March 5th, 1770* by Frederic Kidder (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1870), 50.
[23] David Cochran , 'No. 3’ in *History of the Boston Massacre, March 5th, 1770* by Frederic Kidder (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1870), 48.
[24] Carol Sue Humphrey, 'The Case of the Boston Massacre (1770)' in *The Press on Trial: Crimes and Trials as Media Events*, ed. Lloyd Chiasson (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), 19.
[25] Zobel, *The Boston Massacre*, 212.

the radicals to paint the event as a massacre, with the anonymously-written preface stating 'we see no footsteps of a massacre, or intended massacre, of the inhabitants' in the actions of the soldiers.[26]

Loyalists and Whigs continued the war of words, with suspicions and recriminations abounding – 'looking back on the events of March 2, 3, 4 and 5, townsmen and soldiers alike would discern carefully laid plotting, always on the other side.'[27] Such anger and distrust did nothing to ease tensions between the occupying forces and the New Englanders. The *Fair Account* and the *Narrative of the Horrid Massacre* became the soul of debate, ranged against one another in a trans-Atlantic propaganda war that continued a long process of raising tensions and eroding bonds of commonality between Britain and her colonies. The goal of the radicals following the shootings 'was not so much truth and accuracy in reporting, but propagation of hatred for British rule,' and in the events of March 5 they seemed to have found justification for their efforts.[28]

More justification, however, would be required before the radicals were able to have their way with the perpetrators of the shootings. While Samuel Adams strove 'to pressure the court into conducting the trial immediately,' the soldiers did not stand at the dock until eight months after the incident itself, once the immediate furore had abated.[29] In total four trials took place – one for Captain Preston, one for his soldiers, one for four men accused of firing at the crowd from a building in King Street, and a final trial of a fourteen-year-old servant who changed his testimony during earlier proceedings.[30] The trials of Preston and his men especially were to be a curious juxtaposition - the king's soldiers defended by radical-sympathising John Adams, while the prosecution was led by the Loyalist-leaning Samuel Quincy. Bostonians went

[26] *A Fair Account of the Late Unhappy Disturbance at Boston in New England* (London: B. White, 1770), 11.
[27] Zobel, *The Boston Massacre*, 181.
[28] Humphrey, 'The Case of the Boston Massacre' in *The Press on Trial*, 18.
[29] L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, 'The Boston Massacre Trials' in *American Bar Association Journal, Volume 55* (Chicago, American Bar Association, April, 1969), 329.
[30] Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre*, 187.

out of their way to show that the trials of Captain Thomas Preston and the enlisted men – held separately – were all being conducted fairly. The more astute radicals understood that, even if the soldiers were largely exonerated, maintaining the persona of the fair and reasonable victim would be of best advantage to their cause.

Tellingly, while the public dealt with the dramatic outpouring of claims of massacre and all the emotive accusations that accompanied it, behind court doors the incident of March 5 was dissected with somewhat more detached language. The phrase "massacre" hardly appears at all during recorded proceedings, whether from among Adams' speeches in defence, or even the deposition testimonials of witnesses like Theodore Bliss or Benjamin Burdick, who were part of the hostile crowd that had gathered around the soldiers. The accounts 'did not include any analysis the townspeople or soldiers might have offered on the larger causes behind the Massacre,' and frequently 'reverberate with the intensity of the speaker's desire to avoid tragedy.'[31]

This more measured analysis - conducted for longer than was usual for the court cases of the time - resulted in most of the defendants being freed, and the minor branding of two as punishment. While publicly radicals like Samuel Adams fumed, in reality they had scored another victory by showing that, far from being unreasoning rebels-in-waiting, Bostonians and New England Whigs were strict adherents to the laws of England. Even in his defence of the soldiers John Adams had done the work of a radical, removing the focus from the street agitators to allow the Sons of Liberty to craft a politicised massacre narrative while at the same time asking the prosecution to vent their anger not upon the unfortunate regulars, but upon the British government that had sent them. Such a carefully conducted series of trails was a world away from the anger whipped up in Boston prior to March 5, and it was even further removed from the many massacres of the later war, none of which ever resulted in any sort of public legal hearing. In effect it marked

[31] Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Williamsburg, VA: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 175.

the beginning of the atrocity narrative mentioned by writers such as Hoock, a key aspect of later Patriot propaganda and a device by which the revolutionaries would harness almost all future massacres perpetrated against them.

The Framing of Violent Unrest in America and Britain

As the months passed the radicals busied themselves with keeping the memory of the 'Bloody Incident' alive. The engravings, prints and poetry, the elaborate funerals for the shooting's martyrs and the barrage of damning testimonials all imply that the Boston shootings did indeed come as a terrible shock to most New Englanders, though the specific narrative of a massacre rather than a street brawl or mob action was one that was being pushed primarily by the Sons of Liberty. Even at the close of the nineteenth century George Trevelyan, British author of *The American Revolution*, struggled to understand the idea of the shootings as a massacre – 'there was a sputter of musketry, and five or six civilians dropped down dead or dying. That was the Boston massacre. The number killed was the same as, half a century afterwards, fell in St. Peter's Fields at Manchester.'[32] Indeed, even some initial eyewitness accounts 'did not resemble a massacre, but rather a much more traditional crowd action… a street fight pitting elements of the town against the soldiers had escalated.'[33] Peter Messer's study of the event has shown that the narrative of a massacre rather than a brawl was largely born out of the efforts of the Sons of Liberty – well-to-do individuals who saw themselves as the leading lightings of the radical movement – to avoid giving the mob agency in retellings of the night's events. Eric Hinderaker exposes a similar juxtaposition in his recent work on the subject, *Boston's Massacre* (2017). Here we see John Adams faced with a problem – he can defend the soldiers who fired by claiming they were being beset by an unruly and lawless mob, but in doing so he frames Boston as equally unruly and lawless,

[32] George Otto Trevelyan, *The American Revolution, Part I: 1766 – 1776* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), 119.
[33] Peter Messer, '"A scene of Villainy acted by a dirty Banditti, as must astonish the Public": The Creation of the Boston Massacre' in *New England Quarterly-A Historical Review of New England Life and Letters* 90, no. 4 (2017), 511.

something the leading radicals in the Sons of Liberty were desperate to avoid. Adams' solution is to place much of the blame on what he considers a small number of undesirables that could be said to not represent Boston's populace, most notable the mixed-race Crispus Attucks. These are Adams' 'motley rabble of saucy boys, Negroes and mulattoes, Irish teagues and outlandish jacktars.'[34] In framing the crowd as unrepresentative he removed agency from ordinary Bostonians and helped clear the way for the massacre narrative being crafted by the Sons of Liberty.

As we shall see, clashes between mobs and soldiers were not uncommon in either Britain or America during the period. While Trevelyan references the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, just seven months prior to the killings in Boston soldiers in the town of Spitalfields, England, had deliberately fired upon a crowd of weavers, killing two before violently dispersing the rest. Similarly, in 1768 an event popularly known as the Massacre of Saint George's Fields took place in London in which six or seven men were shot dead and fifteen wounded by British soldiers. The killings had stemmed from a riot begun in protest over the imprisonment of radical politician John Wilkes. The Londoners had shouted slogans that would have been familiar to any New England radical - 'Wilkes and Liberty' and 'Damn the King, damn the Government.'[35] One witness even claimed he heard it said that 'this is the most glorious opportunity of a revolution that ever offered.'[36]

In an almost direct parallel to the Boston shootings, a young man named William Allan was initially pursued by a soldier who 'killed him in particularly outrageous circumstances.'[37] Enraged by the murder, the crowd then assaulted the soldiers with stones. The redcoats proceeded to open fire in great confusion, some shooting into the crowd, others deliberately aiming over their heads. Drawing yet more parallels, in the immediate aftermath of the incident Allan's large funeral was used 'to raise the passions of the

[34] Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre*, 206.
[35] Peter D. G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend to Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 83.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Zobel, *The Boston Massacre*, 179.

people and to strengthen the... cause... in which their leaders had engaged them.'[38] Adams himself referenced Allan in relation to the events in Boston, and New Englanders were very much aware of the Saint George's Fields killings. They were also aware of the fact that the death of Allan, so similar in circumstances to that of Seider, had been, as the *Boston Gazette* asserted, 'cover'd in Britain,' something the gazette promised would not be allowed to happen with the killings in Boston.[39] Following March 5 1770 one Boston newspaper 'underscored that what happened in Boston was far more serious than what had transpired on St. George's Filed in London – a warning "for both Countries." It was a message that apparently resonated with many readers.'[40]

An even more powerful example of the British Army's use of violence towards civilian populations in the eighteenth century came a decade later. In 1780, during the height of the Revolutionary War, the British Army was heavily involved in suppressing the anti-Roman Catholic Gordon Riots in London. In clashes that made the shootings in both Saint George's Fields and Boston seem paltry, troops killed almost three hundred civilians and wounded around two hundred more. Nor were these the only cases of public gatherings being dispersed with force. The Sacheverell Riots of 1710, the Coronation Riots of 1714, the Priestly Riots of 1791 and Bristol Bridge Riot of 1793 all marked periods of disturbance in eighteenth century Britain that more often than not were met with direct force by the military. There were also notable food or bread riots in the years 1709, 1740, 1756, 1757, 1766, 1767, 1773, 1782 and 1785. Indeed, in England between 1740 and 1775 there were 159 major riots recorded, not to mention the 1745 Jacobite rebellion and suppression, as well as minor rebellions in Ireland in 1771 and 1772.[41]

The army also understood its place in maintaining the peace, and it should not be imagined that the soldiers sent to the colonies were entirely

[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] York, *The Boston Massacre*, 88.
[41] David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 77.

inexperienced when it came to handling civilian unrest. While the British Army had not been involved in a full-scale conflict since 1763, many units had been conducting policing duties in Britain prior to their redeployment. As Fischer points out:

> Just before coming to America, the Royal Welch Fusiliers had been used to “restore order” throughout Devon and Cornwall… The 18th Foot had been called upon to stop riots against Press Gangs in Whitehaven. The 43rd and eight other regiments had been assigned to put down agrarian risings… the 4th, and many other units, had been busy along the south coast of England, suppressing rings of highly organised tea smugglers.[42]

Colonial radicals might have viewed the lack of English outrage over military brutality as stemming from the fact that the British public had lost that radical, liberty-loving streak which they still cleaved to, those oft-touted rights of Englishmen that fuelled such discord in seventeenth-century Britain. The reality was somewhat more complex. Britons remained suspicious and wildly critical of their government - the very reason that the military was often required to intercede during bouts of rioting was because Britain still possessed no police force or regulated militia, partly due to the fact that 'they were convinced such a force would be used by the Government for the violation of personal liberty.'[43]

Mob violence, whether spontaneous or orchestrated, was also a frequent feature of the American colonies in the 1760s, and confrontations between rioters and regular British soldiers certainly occurred well before even 1768. The Stamp Riots exposed limits of British authority and the fraying edges of empire North America while also coming perilously close to a large-scale, bloody confrontation years before even the Boston shootings. In November 1765 a New York mob torched an effigy of the local royal governor while a garrison force of British regulars under a Major Thomas James were holed up in the nearby Fort George. Rioters ‘seized the guards posted to protect Major James’s house, then gutted the structure with extraordinary

[42] Fischer, *Paul Revere’s Ride*, 76 – 77.
[43] Anthony Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain: From the Gordon riots to the Gibraltar incident* (Oxon, UK, Routledge: 1990), p, 29.

thoroughness; surrounded the fort, hammered on its gates, chucked rocks at the troops, and taunted them for lacking the courage to shoot.'[44] While New York was the most direct scene of tension between British troops and American rioters, the unrest was mirrored in Boston and dozens of other locations across the colonies.

While the Stamp Riots showed 'the complicated and underappreciated role that violence played in creating the innovative political practices and ideals that underpinned the American Revolution,' there were further incidents during the period that further illustrated the potential for violence between settlers and soldiers. [45] The year 1766 saw an outbreak of unrest amongst squatters and tenants occupying territory on the disputed New York and Massachusetts border. General Gage deployed two regiments of regulars, the 28th and 46th Foot, to quell the disturbance, hoping that by doing so he would curry support and from both the local gentry and the colonial legislatures. The operation proved largely fruitless. The agitators 'confronted the regulars as guerrillas… leading [Captain John] Clarke's troops on a wild chase around eastern Albany County.' At one point British soldiers even found themselves confronted by a battalion of Massachusetts militia who believed they had illegally crossed the border with New York. Ultimately the intervention did nothing to improve relations between the regular army and the colonies.[46]

If the 1760s showed the potential for violent confrontation between soldiers and civilians in both Britain and her American colonies, the specific concept of massacre in the latter was built on something more than just a potential outcome of mob disorder. Indeed, the impact of the Boston shootings and the outcomes it helped to create cannot be understood without first addressing

[44] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000), 678.
[45] Peter C. Messer, 'Stamps and Popes: Rethinking the Role of Violence in the Coming of the American Revolution' in in *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy: The Politics of Violence in the American Revolutionary Era*, eds. Patrick Griffin, Robert G. Ingram, Peter S. Onuf, Brian Schoen (Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 115.
[46] Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 724.

the history of massacres in colonial America, particularly the fraught history of racial tensions between settlers and Native Americans.

Legacies of Race and Massacre

The fact that the Boston shootings were specifically regarded as a massacre in the colonies is better understood when contextualised within the history of British North America. The radicals did not happen upon the phrase massacre by chance. They were aware that the word would incite particular emotions among their readers, cultural memories that had previously helped bring the colonists together in the face of a common foe. In order to fully understand how massacre became almost the norm at certain stages of the Revolutionary War it is necessary to first contextualise the more negative aspects of Native and colonial relations in the century-and-a-half preceding the American Revolution. Further exploration of race, violence and the frontier will feature in chapter four, and while a comprehensive retelling of early American massacres between Natives and settlers is beyond the scope of this work, touching upon the core race dynamics involved in the enforcing of colonial and imperial "white civility" is vital as a basis for understanding violence – and thus massacre – in eighteenth-century America.

In *The Barbarous Years* (2012) Bernard Bailyn points out there was 'never a time, over half a century of settlement, when there was not a racial conflict in one or another of the European colonies in coastal North America… not only random killings, but concerted wars of devastation.'[47] His claim was that the frequent 'merciless slaughter' was directly descended from European experiences of the Thirty Years War and the Dutch rebellion, carried over as it was by settlers who had been involved in those infamously brutal seventeenth century conflicts.[48]

Almost from the beginning then, massacres proliferated between settlers and Natives. In 1622 Powhatan tribesmen attacked Jamestown and nearby

[47] Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 497.
[48] Ibid, 498.

settlements, wiping out a third of the white population. A colonial account delivered to the Virginia Company told how the natives ‘came unarmed into our houses, without bows or arrows, or other weapons’ seemingly in order to sell and trade, but then ‘basely and barbarously murdered, not sparing either age or sex, man, woman or child.’[49] The Powhatan were subsequently decimated by 'three Indian wars... together with constant killings and destruction on a smaller scale; by a system of clearances and man hunts inaugurated in 1644 and continued for some years; by smallpox and other epidemics.'[50]

By the 1760s both colonists and those in Europe were also expressing the “othering” of Natives via Enlightenment and Humanist ideology. The tribes were held to be culturally, rather than “essentially” savage - their otherness could be reduced through Christianisation and submission to “civilising” white laws and authorities. As Patrick Griffin put it, ‘the Indians were “savages,” “heathens,” and “brutes.” But they were redeemable. These terms were used over and over again, suggesting that the framework for understanding human difference was rooted in the concept of civility.’[51] Those who did not accept white civility could safely be demonized in their “savage” state, and became fair game to expansionist colonists – ‘to these settlers, “savage” Indians did not improve the land, and therefore the land was forfeit to Christians.’[52]

Christianity thus remained the central strand in the definition of white civility versus savage otherness. This remained the case even as Enlightenment thinking expanded Humanist concepts of society. Civility through Christianisation could redeem Natives in the eyes of their white neighbours – ‘the idea of civility, in a word, justified both reform and slaughter.’[53] If the

[49] Daniel Gookin, 'The Massacre' in *History of the Virginia Company of London* by Edward Duffield Neill (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1869), p. 318.
[50] James Mooney, 'The Powhatan Confederacy, Past and Present' in *American Anthropologist* Volume 9, Number 1 (1907), p. 133.
[51] Patrick Griffin, ‘Destroying and Reforming Canaan: Making America British’ in *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy: The Politics of Violence in the American Revolutionary Era*, eds. Patrick Griffin, Robert G. Ingram, Peter S. Onuf, Brian Schoen (Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 48.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid, 40.

concept of Christianisation played a role in defining the racial dynamics between settlers and Natives, it therefore also played a role in excusing the shedding of Native blood in acts of massacre, and had done since the first settlement of North America. Following the massacre of a Pequot town on the banks of the Mystic River in 1637, an English soldier, John Underhill, declared ‘I defer you to David's war... Sometimes the scripture declares women and children must perish with their parents... we had sufficient light from the Word of God for our proceedings.'[54] Such an explanation must have sat well with Underhill, for the events at Mystic River were mirrored by later massacres he was involved in during his service with the Dutch. Similar religious language would emerge during the Revolution, as colonists on both sides of the divide sought to rationalist and explain explain how their society had degenerated into open violence with such apparent swiftness. While use of the specific phrase "massacre" varies depending on the bible translation used (the King James Version actually makes little mention of the word itself), the Old Testament in particular is replete with massed killings of unarmed or helpless people, from Elijah burning 102 men to death to Doeg the Edomite slaughtering men, women, children and animals. The spectre of violence was not alien to the Christianising process whites expected Natives to undertake in order to remove their perceived savageness.

There was plenty of religious fervour, and no evidence of regret or distaste, in another account left by the leader of the Mystic River expedition, John Mason. He wrote that 'thus did the Lord judge among the heathen, filling the place with dead bodies... and thus in little more than one hour's space was their impregnable fort with themselves utterly destroyed, to the number of six or seven hundred... there were only seven taken captive, and about seven escaped.'[55] Such writings show how colonists, particularly New Englanders,

[54] John Underhill, 'News from America, or a Late and Experimental Discovery of New England' (London: Peter Cole, 1638) in *The Hinckley Papers: Being Letters and Papers of Thomas Hinckley, Governor of the Colony of New Plymoth*, eds. Thomas Hinckley and Thomas Price (Boston: American Sationers' Company, 1837), p. 25.
[55] John Mason, 'John Mason: History of the Pequot War' in *Encyclopaedia of American Indian History, Volume 1*, eds Bruce E. Johansen and Barry M. Pritzker (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), p. 894.

turned to their faith to successfully rationalise their actions. They continued to do so, even when the enemies became fellow-Christians, whether the French or later the British. Indeed, it did not take long for Europeans to turn techniques of bloodshed and brutality against one another on a large scale in North America, proving that even well before the Revolutionary War concepts of white civility could be bent or entirely subverted in the "othering" of an appropriate enemy.

Some of the earliest incidents of colonists unleashing massacre upon fellow settlers occurred during King William's War. Ostensibly a continuation of the conflict began in Europe in 1688, in the northern colonies its causes were heavily wrapped up in competition for the lucrative beaver pelt trade and jostling for power and position between England, France and a number of Native tribal confederations. On August 5 1689, a large warband of Mohawks allied to the English, attacked the French colonial settlement of Lachine. After a spate of killings and the torching of buildings, the Mohawks 'burned five Frenchmen, roasted six children, and grilled some others on the coals and ate them.'[56] Similar French accounts speak of the most savage brutalities meted out against those taken prisoner.

While the veracity of such tales can never be checked against the Mohawk accounts – none of which survive – we can at least be certain of the events stemming from the Lachine massacre. On February 8 1689, at a settlement called Schenectady in what had until recently been the Dutch colony of New York, a combined force of French-Canadian colonists and their Native allies fell upon the unsuspecting homesteads. 'All was massacre and pillage for two hours,' wrote one account, stating that the inhabitants 'fell beneath the tomahawk, or were taken prisoners,' and that when one woman tried to flee with a 'infant child in her arms. They snatched the innocent from her arms, and dashed out its brains.'[57]

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[56] François de Belmont Vachon, 'History of Canada' in *Canada: A People's History Volume 1* eds. Don Gillmor and Pierre Turgeon (Toronto: McCelland and Stewart, 2000), 91.
[57] William Dunlap, and Adriaen van der Donck, *History of the New Netherlands, Province of New York, and State of New York, Volume 1* (New York: Carter and Thorp, 1839), 176.

Massacres had been occurring between colonists and Native Americans almost since the arrival of the first European settlers, but the fact that the brutality evidenced at Schenectady had been conducted at the orders of fellow Christian Europeans and not those painted as barbarous outsiders ultimately did not prove difficult for English colonial authors to rationalise. Writers were able to damn the acts of French "papist" brutality as easily as they did the ravaging of the Natives, and they would do so with equal ease when, eventually, it was British soldiers who found themselves unwelcome in parts of North America.

Deerfield and the Retrospective Construction of Massacre

In the decades following King William's War the use of joint colonial and Native raids designed to terrorise frontier settlements became almost entirely normalised. On February 29 1704, at the start of Queen Anne's War – again an extension of a wider European struggle – a force of French and combined Native American tribes struck at the New England town of Deerfield. During the assault 44 of the town's residents were killed, 25 of whom were children. At a glance it may seem as though this is yet another example of excessive violence meted out in an effort to force the abandonment of frontier settlements through fear. It might be expected that the New Englanders would have decried the attack as a massacre, as had been the case with other such incidents. In fact, the idea that the bloodshed at Deerfield constituted a massacre did not emerge until over a century afterwards.

In their study of the attack on Deerfield, Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney established that:

> It took the founding of the United States to turn the "destruction of Deerfield" into a massacre. The word *massacre* first appeared in print in 1804, when the Revered John Taylor of Deerfield used the word five times in his centennial sermon commemorating the "Destruction of the Town"… After this sermon, some nineteenth-century writers occasionally spoke of

> "the massacre of the Inhabitants of Deerfield" or "the Deerfield Massacre."[58]

Interestingly, modern commemorations of the event similarly try to avoid the phrase "massacre," acknowledging just what a heavily loaded term it is – 'current commemoration seeks to bring people together by helping them understand the cultures… that converged in what one organiser referred to rather blandly as "the Deerfield Incident." For the organiser of these annual events "massacre is a dirty word."'[59] In this regard the modern view is in keeping with the original understanding of what happened at Deerfield, for 'massacre also was not a word used by the English colonists themselves to describe what happened… Colonial New Englanders, though shocked and outraged by the raid, did not call it a massacre.'[60]

At a glance the incident at Deerfield should have possessed all the prerequisites for a seventeenth or eighteenth-century colonial massacre. A surprise assault resulted in unarmed civilians being killed in their homes regardless of gender or age, while the settlement was looted and torched. During the French withdrawal more civilian prisoners, including young children, were killed because they were proving too much of an encumbrance. The reason colonists were not immediately outraged may lie in the fact that, as far as the perpetrators were concerned, the attack did not actually go as planned. Unlike raids such as Schenectady, the French and Natives did not have the luxury of infiltrating Deerfield while the inhabitants slept. This was partly due to the difficulty of coordinating the five separate Native tribal contingents that comprised the French force, but the attackers were also severely hampered by the fact that the townspeople had a degree of forewarning. Consequently, when the fighting actually broke out a number of the New Englanders successfully fortified themselves, others escaped, and it was not long before a relief force arrived to reinforce the defenders.

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[58] Even Haefeli, and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: the 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 273.
[59] Ibid, 272.
[60] Ibid.

All this meant that ‘casualties among the raiders had also been heavier than one would expect for a battle later characterised as a massacre… the Deerfield raid was the costliest for the French and their Native allies.’[61] Because of this, the English colonists felt as though they had given a good account of themselves during the town’s defence, while the French exaggerated figures in official reports to cover up for a raid that had not gone as planned, enhancing the number of settlers killed while reducing the number of their own participants that had supposedly been involved. The results of all this are illuminating – even if an engagement was able to match almost all of the details of past incidents which had been labelled as massacres, perception was key. The New Englanders did not believe they had been massacred and so, in a sense, they had not been, at least until commemorators a century later decided that that was what had happened. Such a divergence in point of view would occur frequently during American Revolutionary War massacres and their later commemorations, especially, as we shall see, with the war’s opening engagement at Lexington.

After labelling the fight at Deerfield as a massacre in the nineteenth century, the event’s importance grew in the public consciousness. Despite the similarities to a dozen other violent incidents in the decades before and after, the Deerfield raid came to hold a particular place in the minds of post-Revolutionary Americans. It became embroiled in Turner's Frontier Thesis of the late nineteenth century, which argued that the national consciousness of the United States was formed on the colonial borders in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Within such a narrative Deerfield became an early touchstone, an example of how the fledgling American spirit triumphed in the face of what was painted as the bloodiest and most savage kind of adversity. The reconstruction of a massacre formed through acts of remembrance heightened the importance of Deerfield and the events that had occurred there. In short, ‘the Deerfield raid continued to be remembered… because it had acquired a distinctive name: the Deerfield Massacre.’[62] Singling out a

[61] Ibid, 123.
[62] Ibid, 273.

particular event for the title of massacre, despite the fact that there were any number of similar events that were not labelled as such, is a theme that would reappear again both before and during the Revolution.

Fort William Henry and Massacre as a Propaganda Leveller

As the eighteenth century progressed tensions in the colonies continued to lead to spates of extreme violence – the torching of Fort Neoheroka by colonial troops in 1713, which led to the burning to death of hundreds of men, women and children, or the raid on Norridgewock in 1724, which again saw dozens of Native American civilians killed in an attack specifically designed to sow terror and drive Natives from land that could be settled by colonists.

The Seven Year's War brought the imperial contest between Britain and France to a head. Despite the much-discussed arrival of European-style warfare in North America, the reality of the conflict was still one of small-scale raids, skirmishes, ambushes and, indeed, massacres. It opened with accusations of atrocity, when Native Americans, in defiance of the entreaties of a young George Washington, killed a number of French prisoners in cold blood. Three years later, in 1757, the most infamous massacre of the war occurred at Fort William Henry, near Lake George in the colony of New York.

On August 8 the British garrison of the fort surrendered to a combined French and Native force commanded by General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm. In the terms of surrender, the garrison was permitted to march free, albeit under an 18-month parole. However, the Natives did not adhere to the directives of their allies. Having been denied the plunder and prisoners promised to them by the French, they attacked the column of soldiers and civilians soon after they abandoned the fort.

In a now-familiar pattern, the popular idea of the massacre that followed became heavily removed from the realities of the event itself. Contemporaries read first-hand accounts that described how terrifying and chaotic the evacuation of Fort William Henry was. The idea then developed in the public imagination that the Natives fell upon the column en-mass and set

about slaughtering the British and their colonists indiscriminately, with few survivors. Such a view was made famous thanks in part to the fictional 1826 novel *Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper.[63]

The true events of the attack upon the column are far more complex than the traditional narrative permits. For a start the Native assault was not a unified undertaking, but was more a case of individual bands from separate tribes dogging the column over a prolonged march. The Natives did not so much attack as harass individual sections, not always with the clear intention of shedding blood. The situation did eventually degenerate, with the column ultimately disintegrating. Some Natives took the opportunity to kill and scalp (a cultural privilege they felt they had been denied by their French allies), while others carried off prisoners of all ages and genders. The French, not wishing to feed the chaos by becoming embroiled, 'utterly failed to protect their British prisoners,' a fact that outraged contemporaries as much as the massacre itself. [64]

While the exact number of those killed or carried off into captivity will never be known, it has been persuasively argued that the figure 'could not possibly have exceeded 185' and was in reality was probably closer to 69 – a far cry from the 1,500 that had been stated in popular literature. [65] Considering that the retreating column numbered over two thousand persons, it would seem at first that the scale of bloodshed does not match the infamy the events at Fort William Henry have assumed in the public mind. As we have established, however, the actual number or even proportion of those killed in any case of eighteenth-century violence often has little bearing on how an event is remembered. Ultimately 'provincial outrage over "the massacre of Fort William Henry" would feed an already ferocious anti-Catholic tradition in New

[63] And indeed by the 1992 blockbuster film adaptation, where the column of refugees is all-but wiped out and the British commander, Monro, is killed and mutilated, none of which occurred in reality.
[64] David R. Starbuck, *The Legacy of Fort William Henry: Resurrecting the Past* (Lebanon NH: University Press of New England, 2014), 4.
[65] Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the "Massacre"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 144.

England and intensify an undiscriminating Anglo-American hatred of Indians,' thus bolstering Britain's efforts in North America over the remainder of the Seven Years War.[66]

The Fort William Henry incident deserves further attention because reactions to it down the centuries mirror many of the later reactions to incidents of massacre during the American Revolution. In Ian K. Steele's book there are five phases of historiography identified that help the development of the idea of a dreadful massacre from the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth.[67] One eyewitness account that became popular in the immediate aftermath describes how 'it is not in the power of words to give any tolerable idea of the horrid scene that now ensued; men, women, and children were dispatched in the most wanton and cruel manner, and immediately scalped. Many of these savages drank the blood of their victims, as it flowed warm from the fatal wound.'[68] The writer, one Jonathan Carver, more or less directly blamed the French for not stopping the bloodshed, the consequences of which, he claimed, were 'dreadful, and not to be paralleled in modern history.'[69]

Conversely, it has been argued that the French did all within their reasonable power to avert bloodshed, especially given that the killings that did occur were not as sustained or wholesale as they could have been. Confusion reigned during the Native attacks, and remained prevalent in the immediate retellings. Within weeks of the event even British colonial papers were struggling to discern what had taken place.[70] Steele argues that Montcalm actively tried to stop the Native attacks, demonstrating 'outrage, courage, and determination to remedy the situation.' [71] The chaos of it all, and the fact that it was happening over an extended, forested location, meant that it is almost

[66] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000), 199.
[67] Steele, *Betrayals*, 149.
[68] Jonathan Carver, 'Narrative of the Captivity of Jonathan Carver' in *Western Scenes and Reminiscences*, ed. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (Buffalo: Derby and Miller, 1853), 490.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Steele, *Betrayals,* 149.
[71] Ibid, 119.

impossible to claim that there was a deliberate, blanket failure by the French to intervene. The fact that some junior officers decided not to set themselves between their enemies and their erstwhile allies while they were determined to take scalps is hardly surprising, nor can it be taken as an indictment of the larger French force. According to Steele, Anglocentric historians have gone out of their way to vilify the French, latching onto accounts such as Carver's to build a massacre narrative that fitted a particular agenda. The killings were not so much a massacre as 'a series of misunderstandings and betrayals' largely revolving around the fact that the British surrender deprived the Natives the 'promised scalps and plunder in exchange for their participation in the expedition from Canada.'[72]

The debate over the events of Fort William Henry offers an example of the wider historiographic struggle that also takes place over many accounts of Revolutionary War massacres. As early as 1859, one biographer of British general Israel Putnam talked about how many 'different writers have taken different views of the conduct of the French general [Montcalm], in relation to this cruel massacre,' with the author in question deciding that 'charity inclines us to accept' that Montcalm had done all he could to avoid the bloodshed.[73]

Such discourse has only intensified in the past few decades. In *Massacre at Fort William Henry*, David R. Starbuck actively combats Steele's belief that the event was not truly a massacre, opening with a discussion about how 'none of the controversies pertaining to the fort have ever been resolved, and scholarly interpretations diverge on every aspect of what happened and why.'[74] He actively cites Steele's thesis as something he disagrees with on multiple levels, and points out problems with events at Fort William Henry that are pertinent for many of the later studies relating to precise casualties, motivations and even the exact location of events – 'there is a host of specific points about which the documents do not give clear answers.'[75] Ultimately

[72] Ibid.
[73] William Cutter, *The Life of Israel Putnam,* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859), 4.
[74] Starbuck, *Massacre at Fort William Henry*, 2.
[75] Ibid.

Starbuck is of the belief that 'repeated unwillingness to upholds the peace terms, especially in light of the massacre at Oswego just a year earlier, strongly indicates French indifference to English life and property, and the French richly deserve the blame that has been given them by past authors.'[76] The divide between Steele and Starbuck is merely the latest set of interpretations that would dog similar events throughout the period, from Deerfield to Boston.

For their own part, the French were not inclined to view the events of the Fort William Henry surrender as an atrocity, proving that, as ever, the specific concept of massacre is in the eye of the beholder. While the French acknowledged that the aftermath of the siege had been unfortunate – Montcalm's own aide, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, actually predicted a massacre after the surrender – the general French attitude was best described as 'ambivalent.'[77] In contrast, and much like the Whigs in the aftermath of the Boston shootings of 1770, the British and their colonial forces were swift to turn the outcome of Fort William Henry against their enemies. In the months following the killings newspaper articles and accounts 'exaggerated the number of those killed and captured by the attacking French and Indian force' and, at least according to Starbuck, 'were understandably outraged by what they described as a massacre.'[78] It is also interesting to note that the majority of the victims were not native Britons, but colonial troops from New Hampshire that made up the rear of the withdrawing column. The incident therefore helped feed a particular mind-set that, first of all, saw the colonists (rightly or wrongly) styling themselves as victims and, secondly, using the massacre as a rallying cry not only in the local area, but across British North America. In terms of the Revolution, the incident at Fort William Henry was therefore a taste of things to come.

In her book on the impact of King Philip's War on later American identity, Jill Lepore defined the importance of language in warfare, especially when it

[76] Ibid, 111.
[77] Ibid, 14.
[78] Ibid, 13 - 14.

came to massacres and atrocities - 'the words used to describe and define war are among the tiredest in any language. "Bloody," "brutal," "cruel," "savage," "atrocious" – all overused and imprecise. Yet they remain shocking, perhaps because of their very vagueness… I call your attack a massacre, you call my resistance treachery.'[79] If nothing else, an examination of events described as massacres in colonial America bears out the fact that the North American continent had been the site of what can easily be described as frequent incidents of extreme violence between Europeans almost since the founding of the first colonies. By 1775 colonists of all political persuasions were adept at conducting massacres and remembering defeats in a way that cast themselves as the victims. The largely misplaced kill or be killed mentality that some later hailed as part of the pioneer spirit meant that concepts of massacre were not just a natural addition to the mindset of colonists – whether Patriot or Loyalist – they were frequently a driving force behind violence and how it was perceived. The word "massacre" was used to describe the shootings in Boston in 1770 not at random, but because it evoked older fears and emotions among the colonial readership, fears the radicals wished to play upon.

Events such as Deerfield and Fort William Henry also show that the term "massacre" was not only highly subjective and effective in eliciting an emotional response, but it also helped embed an event in the public consciousness. Militarily Deerfield and Fort William Henry did not have a tumultuous impact on the course of either war, but once assigned the title of massacre – whether immediately afterwards or many decades later – they became focal points in popular colonial memory. Understanding this, the radicals in New England set out to ensure the Boston shootings were immortalised in the same way. After the shootings, those colonists who wished to create further unrest were able to draw upon the legacy of those who had come before. This "massacre mind-set" is part of the reason why colonists reacted with such outrage to Boston, while similar events in Britain

[79] Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009), 1 – 2.

had provoked far less consequential backlash. It also explains why the British military, so used to peacekeeping and the use of deadly force during riot control in Britain, was unprepared for the backlash its actions caused in the colonies.

Differences between British and colonial attitudes towards massacre were further highlighted by two aspects. Firstly the radicals in America were too clever to squander their position as victims and lose public approval through unrestrained rioting. Secondly, the pace and nature of events had allowed the growth of a radical movement that had already laid down strong roots in the press and among intellectual circles by 1770. The Boston massacre provided them with a case of seemingly unjustifiable barbarity on the part of the government, and could be used to help Americans transform their views of the British into something foreign, something which, like the Natives and the French before them, could be freely demonised. In doing so they helped form what Hoock would term the atrocity narrative, a particular propaganda slant that would allow the later Patriots to both condone the massacre of the enemy, and further vilify them when they in turn committed massacres. Such a strategy ensured that the opening shots of the war set the tone for confusion, misinformation and outrage.

Chapter Two: Lexington

He said to his friend, "if the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry-arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal light, -
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm[1]

An extract from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, known most commonly as *Paul Revere's Midnight Ride*, gives an insight into the power of the mythology that had already arisen around the opening of the American Revolutionary War less than a century after it began. Quite apart from the fact that in Revere's day North Church was known as Christ Church, or that it was Revere who lit the signal lamps for his compatriots and not the other way round, it is safe to assume the well-known phrase *the British are coming* (a line that is itself merely extrapolated from Longfellow's poem) was never uttered. For a start, Revere's mission to alert the countryside to the incursion of government soldiers had a covert element. Disguised British officers patrolled New England's roads and lanes looking for radicals, and indeed, Revere was actually apprehended during his famous ride. Furthermore, the concept of Revere referring to the *British* as though they were some alien power does not fit the worldview of people living in Massachusetts in 1775. Even most revolutionaries in New England were not yet drawing definitive distinctions between their status as Americans and their status as English or British subjects. Given context, the phrase makes little sense. A better candidate, if Revere shouted anything at all during his ride, would have been *the regulars are out.*

[1] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 'The Landlord's Tale' in *Tales of a Wayside Inn* (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1864), 20.

Context, then, is everything, especially when considering the events in and around Lexington and Concord on April 19 1775. The start of the Revolutionary War has long been burdened by the weight of nation-building and national memory, anchored by such artistic retellings as Longfellow's poem, Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Concord Hymn* or William Barns Wollen's painting, *The Battle of Lexington, April 19 1775.* These later accounts all share a dramatic, magisterial quality that is removed from the confusion, panic, anger and bloodshed of April 19. Violence plays little or no role in their retelling. The reality was somewhat different – the final shots had barely rung out on April 19 before both sides were jostling to impose their understanding on the day's events, and nor were concerns purely relegated to wartime propaganda. Well into the nineteenth century, exactly what had happened at Lexington and Concord remained a point of fierce controversy.

This chapter revisits the engagement at Lexington and the withdrawal from Concord to Boston on April 19, re-examining it in the context of a contested massacre. The importance of Lexington and Concord as the first scenes of bloodshed during the revolution are highlighted, as is how they were used as a rallying cry for the revolutionary cause. In the second half of the chapter Lexington is again revisited, this time in order to show how the understanding of massacres can change over time. The shift of Lexington from massacre to battle, even among the opinions of those involved in it, is revealing of the subjectivity involved in the many similar cases throughout this thesis.

Lexington the Battle versus Lexington the Massacre

At the 2010 Memory Matters conference, hosted by the Miami University of Ohio, historian Edward T. Linenthal spoke on the topic of 'the perils and promise of public history.'[2] The event that framed the start of his discussion was the battle of Lexington. Linenthal spoke about the first image produced of the engagement, Amos Doolittle's lithograph that appeared for sale in the

[2] Edward T. Linenthal, 'From Lexington and Concord to Oklahoma City: The Perils and Promise of Public History' in *Memory Matters: Proceedings from the 2010 Conference Hosted by the Humanities Centre Miami, University of Ohio*, eds. Daniel M. Cobb and Helen Sheumaker (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 2011), 8.

Connecticut Journal in December 1775, eight months after the battle. He described how the artwork showed a relatively minor engagement, a 'fairly accurate depiction of what happened on Lexington Green,' where a small band of Patriot militia had encountered the advance companies of a column of British regulars.[3] Linenthal went on to discuss how the understanding of this event – and the images that portrayed it – changed and became more embellished in the nineteenth century. Much of the process began, Linenthal claimed, following Lafayette's visit to Lexington and the surrounding area for the fiftieth anniversary of the battle. At Concord bridge Ralph Waldo Emerson told the Frenchman that 'this is where the first battle of the Revolution took place.'[4]

The wording did not sit well with the people of either Lexington or Concord. Those from Lexington stressed that their green was where the first true "battle" had occurred, while the people of Concord and nearby Acton claimed 'that [Lexington] was a massacre. It wasn't a battle.'[5] The difference was clear in the minds of the inhabitants during the early nineteenth century, as was its importance.

In his talk, Linenthal described the vital nature of 'the primacy of redemptive sacrifice and blood sacrifice. Those who die in a massacre are not making a conscious sacrifice. Their blood doesn't carry that same symbolic weight, and it was terribly important for people in Lexington to think about this as a meaningful blood sacrifice.'[6] They worked hard throughout the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s to transform the first clash of the American Revolution from the status of massacre to battle, while others persisted with the distinction. Frederic Hudson, for example, writing in the mid-1800s, specifically entitled his account of the opening clashes *The Massacre at Lexington Green and the Fight at Concord Bridge.* Similarly, a resident of Concord went so far as to publish a book dedicated to arguing that Concord was the first scene of

[3] Ibid, 10.
[4] Ibid, 9.
[5] Ibid, 10.
[6] Ibid.

armed Patriot resistance, whereas 'Lexington was merely a massacre.'[7] In what retrospectively seems like a strange parody of the events in Boston after the 1770 shootings, a committee was founded in Lexington that collected the testimonies of eyewitnesses and participants from the 1775 engagement on the Green, seeking to prove that the incident had been a battle, and not a massacre. Following the committee's published rebuttal, in 1825, a Concord resident in turn wrote a reply 'backed by his own depositions, supporting the massacre claim.'[8] He went so far as to grapple with the definition of a massacre, stating that 'there seems to be some difficulty in forming an idea of hostility and battle, when one party only assaults; it seems like one fighting alone. A violent attack, however, may be an important step in bringing on mutual conflict.'[9] He cites primary accounts of the clash at Lexington as indicating that 'no one would ever think of a battle, or a firing of both sides, but only of a cruel and horrid massacre.'[10] One Reverend Doctor Ripley, meanwhile, donated a plot of land in 1834 to the town of Concord specifically to commemorate ‘where the Battle at the North Bridge took place.’[11]

Even today the distinction remains important to some - Linenthal related how he had once claimed Lexington was a massacre to a museum curator in Lexington itself. He was told 'in no uncertain terms that this, in fact, was a battle and not a massacre.'[12] Illustrating the contrary view, the modern-day website for the Concord Museum invites its visitors to explore 'the first shots in the battle for American Independence' at Concord. Contrasting the pointed use of the phrases battle and massacre, in his 1978 work *The First Stroke* Thomas Fleming writes about how militia colonel James Barrett's military experience ensured 'there was no chance of the Lexington massacre being

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[7] Richard Kollen, *Lexington: From Liberty's Birthplace to Progressive Suburb* (Charleston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 42.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ezra Ripley, *A History of the Fight at Concord* (Concord, MA: Herman Atwill, 1832), 31.
[10] Ibid, 32.
[11] Lemuel Shattuck, *A History of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County, Massachusetts* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company, 1835), 351.
[12] Linenthal, 'From Lexington and Concord to Oklahoma City' in *Memory Matters*, 10.

repeated on a bigger scale in Concord.'[13] Fleming uses the phrase battle and massacre interchangeably and does not pause to consider that the fight at Lexington may or may not have been specifically a massacre. Nor does he spend any time considering whether or not the word in itself is a loaded one for those describing the events of April 19 1775 - something that far too many previous scholars have overlooked.

That some inhabitants of New England should try so hard to distance themselves from the idea of massacre may seem surprising given the highly politicised fervour they displayed when applying the same word to the Boston shootings of 1770. The situation becomes even stranger when considering the initial reactions of the colonists to the fighting at Lexington and Concord and the atrocity narrative that developed throughout the war. Initially, New Englanders held the use of force by British regulars against the militia to be just as heinous a crime as the killings in Boston. There was certainly no hesitation over calling the day's fighting – whether at Lexington, Concord, or along the road back to Boston – a massacre. British and Loyalist commentators were similarly unequivocal when it came to the actions of their opponents. Accounts spoke not of open conflict and battle, but of murder, treachery and assassination. Despite this, later commentaries proved that the idea of Lexington as a massacre would only persist for as long as the description fitted a wider narrative. Lexington the massacre or Lexington the battle – both were held to be true under different circumstances. The word, like the concepts surrounding it, remained malleable, a fact that was put to good use by writers and propagandists throughout the war.

The March to Concord

In the early hours of April 19 1775, around one thousand two hundred British regulars – mostly grenadiers, light infantry and marines - disembarked from Royal Navy barges near Phipp's Farm, close to the village of Cambridge, Massachusetts. After a pause to unload equipment and eat, the column

[13] Thomas Fleming, *The First Stroke: Lexington, Concord, and the beginning of the American Revolution* (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1978), 52.

assembled into marching order and headed into the New England hinterland. Only a few officers among the column were aware of the expedition's purpose. The objectives were so secret that even the column's commander, Colonel Francis Smith, had received his orders in a sealed envelope with instructions not to open it until his men were underway.

The regulars could have dispensed with such secrecy, for while the soldiers themselves may not have known the precise details of what they were about, the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside seemed perfectly aware. As the march continued, the regulars could hear bells tolling in the dark, alerting New Englanders to their presence and calling out the colonial militia. After an hour on the road, Colonel Smith sent six companies of light infantry ahead of the main column in an effort to reach their primary objective – the village of Concord – faster. An hour later, and doubtless with a growing sense of foreboding, Smith sent a rider back to the British garrison in Boston requesting reinforcements.

In the five years since the Boston shootings, the situation in the Thirteen Colonies had continued to deteriorate towards outright violence. Despite the repeal of most of the Townsend Acts in 1770, radicals continued to agitate against Parliament's policies. In 1772, a British ship engaged in anti-smuggling activities was burned off of Rhode Island. Later that year permanent Committees of Correspondence and Committees of Safety began to appear first in New England and then across all of the Thirteen Colonies. These formed the basis of the radicals' new government, and allowed the colonies to operate independent of royal authority.

Britain's 1773 Tea Act caused fresh disorder in Boston when a band of radicals stormed ships carrying tea imports and dumped vast quantities of it into Boston harbour. As a direct consequence Parliament passed the Coercive Acts – styled by Whigs in America as the Intolerable Acts – in an attempt to make an example of Massachusetts. The Acts closed the port of Boston until it had paid for the lost tea, removed the colony's seventeenth-century charter, removed the trials of royal officials in New England across

the Atlantic to Britain, and reinforced the Quartering Act that permitted the housing of British soldiers in unoccupied buildings. On top of this, a fifth Act enlarged the neighbouring colony of Quebec and gave benefits to its Franco-Catholic inhabitants. While not directly concerning Massachusetts, such a step certainly did not meet with the approval of Protestant, Puritan New England.

The Coercive Acts caused outrage not just in New England, but throughout the Thirteen Colonies. In September 1774, disaffected colonists formed the First Continental Congress, which sought to provide a focussed and unified front to oppose the measures being passed by Parliament. By this stage, the British government's authority in New England was in the process of total collapse. The Continental Congress, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and the Committees of Safety ensured that British law and order was almost wholly restricted to Boston. General Thomas Gage, who had been appointment Britain's new military governor in Massachusetts, was occupying Boston with around four thousand regulars, but communicated his unease at the political situation to Britain – 'if you think ten thousand men sufficient, send twenty; if one million is thought enough, give two; you save both blood and treasure in the end.'[14]

Aware that the radicals now had complete control over the colonial militias, Gage authorised a series of punitive strikes in late 1774 and early 1775 on caches of weapons and ammunition throughout New England. These stockpiles variously belonged to the provincial government or local towns, but by removing them Gage hoped to disarm the growing threat posed by the revolutionaries. The reaction of colonists to the seizure of supplies came to be known as the Powder Alarms. The most famous of these incidents occurred on September 1 1774, when British soldiers rowed up the Mystic River and seized the largest cache of gunpowder in Massachusetts along with two cannons, which they took from nearby Cambridge. The presence of

[14] Thomas Gage in *Dr Joseph Warren: The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill, and the Birth of American Liberty,* ed. Samuel A. Forman (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2012), 261.

the regulars caused panic throughout the countryside. While assembling too late to stop the seizure of the powder, Patriot militias flocked to Cambridge, where they forced prominent Loyalists to evacuate to Boston for their own safety. Rumours abounded, with John Adams reporting that some even believed the Royal Navy had bombarded Boston.[15]

The incident on September 1 caused the Patriots to accelerate the process of organisation, forming specific "minuteman" militia companies and pre-emptively seizing powder supplies before the regulars could reach them. This, combined with the general breakdown of British authority throughout New England, resulted in King George declaring the colony of Massachusetts in open rebellion on February 9, 1775. Alongside this declaration, Parliament undertook the Restraining Acts, extending its blockade of Boston's trade to encompass the whole of Massachusetts and forcing New England to trade only with Britain, as well as barring New England ships from the North Atlantic fisheries. Such actions not only further enflamed colonial mood, but came too late anyway – by 1775 the Patriots had 'seized all political authority from British officials and vested it in their town meetings, county conventions, and a Provincial Congress.'[16]

All of this ensured that New England in April 1775 was a place on the brink of total armed rebellion. It nearly broke out on February 27, when another British expedition to seize arms and ammunition was foiled. The Patriots delayed the column long enough to remove their weapons from a cache at Salem. There was physical violence and abuse but, crucially, no shots were fired. As far as the British government was concerned, such a state of flagrant lawlessness could not be allowed to continue. On April 14, Gage received orders from the British Secretary of State, the Earl of Dartmouth. He was to 'arrest and imprison the principle actors and abettors in the Provincial Congress,' albeit at his own discretion. Dartmouth went so far as claim that it

[15] John Adams in *Adams on Adams*, ed. Paul M. Zall (Lexington KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 57.
[16] Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths: Stories that Hide our Patriotic Past* (New York: The New Press, 2014), 84.

would be better to engage the radicals openly sooner rather than later, stating that 'it will surely be better that the conflict should be brought on upon such a ground, than in a riper state of rebellion.'[17]

Aware that the situation would not be improved with inaction, Gage immediately formulated a plan to move against one of the largest remaining militia supply depots at Concord, as well as attempt to snatch up two of the foremost agitators, Samuel Adams and John Hancock, who had fled Boston and were sheltering at Lexington. Unbeknownst to Gage, on April 8 the radicals had pre-empted his plans and spread most of their supplies in Concord among the surrounding towns and villages. Gage went ahead with the operation, oblivious to the change. The orders he gave to Colonel Smith, to be opened only once the column of regulars had departed Boston, specified that 'you will seize and destroy all Artillery, Ammunition, Provisions, Tents, Small Arms, and all Military Stores whatever' at Concord. Gage added that 'you will take care that the Soldiers do not plunder the Inhabitants, or hurt private property.'[18]

Direct confrontation and bloodshed was not the desire of most of those present at Lexington on the morning of April 19. Despite a decade of ill will and unrest, the vast majority of colonists in 1775 still considered themselves British, and both sides were hesitant to fire the Concord Hymn's immortal "shot heard around the world." The British officer commanding the light infantry that first encountered the Patriot militia at Lexington told how he 'called to the soldiers not to fire, but surround and disarm them.'[19] Likewise Captain Parker, commander of the militia, stated that he had ordered 'our Militia to disperse, and not to fire.'[20] The fact that the militia had been drawn up in rank and file on Lexington common seems to support the hypothesis

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[17] William Legge, 'Lord Dartmouth to General Gage' in *The Writings of George Washington, Volume III*, ed. Jared Sparks (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847), 507 – 508.
[18] Paul R. Misencik, *The Original American Spies: Seven Covert Agents of the Revolutionary War* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Company, 2014), 28.
[19] John Pitcairn in *Three to Ride: A Ride That Defied an Empire and Spawned a Nation*, ed. John C. Redmond (Lanham MA: Hamilton Books, 2012), 257.
[20] John Parker, 'Lexington, April 25, 1775' in *Journals of the American Congress from 1744 – 1788, in Four Volumes: Volume I* (Washington DC: Way and Gideon, 1823), 59.

that the militia as a whole were not seeking bloodshed, since they had not physically blocked the road being used by the regulars. Parker was aware that most of the stores in Concord had been moved to safety, and that there was no need to attempt to impede the regulars. He later stated that he had 'concluded not to be discovered, nor meddle or make with said Regular Troops.'[21] The militia that morning had assembled in the darkness when the alarm had first gone round before disbanding to go 'into houses near the place of parade' to rest and refresh themselves.[22] When the regulars arrived some militia were still hurrying from the surrounding buildings through the predawn gloom. Had the leading companies of the column not decided to file off the roadway and confront the small band of militiamen, the entire expedition may well have passed them by without incident.

At this point confusion, fear, and frayed tempers took over. Just as individual human emotions had proved to be the fatal tipping point with the shootings in Boston five years earlier, so again unnamed and unremembered persons transformed the fraught encounter between the regulars and the militia into a military engagement. Someone, somewhere, fired. The light infantry rushed in with their bayonets, all discipline gone. Eight militiamen were killed, at the expense of a single wounded regular. Colonel Smith rode up from the main column and, with his grenadiers, eventually brought his advance guard back under control. In order to revive shaken spirits and ensure such an accident could not happen again, Smith ordered his men to loose off a victory salute, thus emptying their muskets. This done, their march resumed.[23]

The Concord militia had been drawing up in the town in anticipation of the British arrival, but had decided to withdraw to more defensible ground, atop a rise beyond Concord's North Bridge. Smith's regulars therefore entered Concord unopposed and set about the work they had left Boston to do. Searches turned up food and ammunition supplies and, most surprisingly,

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[21] Ibid.
[22] 'Deposition No. 2' in *History of the Siege of Boston, and the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill*, ed. Richard Frothingham (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), 367.
[23] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 197 – 200.

three heavy twenty-four pounder cannons. The salted meat and flour was dumped in a nearby pond along with captured musket balls, while the cannon's trunions were destroyed. In burning the cannon carriages the soldiers accidentally set fire to Concord's meetinghouse. The deposition of a local woman described how she 'ventured to beg of the officers to send some of their men to put out the fire' until 'at last, by one pail of water after another, they sent and did extinguish the fire.'[24]

Seeing the smoke rising from Concord, the Patriot militia advanced towards the northern bridge leading to the town, where they encountered a small force of Smith's regulars sent out to secure the same route. The British panicked and opened fire, killing a number of militiamen. A retaliatory salvo left three soldiers dead and thirteen wounded. Exhausted, outnumbered four to one, with little previous combat experience and on the brink of becoming surrounded, the regulars fell back towards the main force at Concord. Rather than pursue, the militia took up defensive positions around the town, tightening the noose around Smith's men.

While the majority of the regulars continued to search Concord, one detachment sent to investigate the nearby home of a militia officer found itself on the wrong side of the river. Fortunately for them the militia had abandoned the bridge were they had first driven off the regulars, so the detachment was able to cross it and return to Concord unopposed. As they did so they passed the bodies of those killed in the earlier clash. One of the corpses seemed to have suffered a vicious head wound from a bladed weapon - the rumour that the colonists were scalping British dead and wounded 'multiplied and took flight.'[25]

Scalping and the Echoes of Fort William Henry

[24] Martha Moulton, 'No. 5. – Petition of Marthal Moulton, Relative to the Events in Concord' in *History of the Siege of Boston and of the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill*, ed. Richard Frothingham (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), 370.
[25] Gregory Evans Dowd, *Groundless: Rumours, Legends and Hoaxes on the Early American Frontier* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015), 167.

Among the Crown Forces that day was Ensign Jeremy Lister. At the age of 23, he was the youngest officer present with the column.[26] He had only joined the expedition hours before it departed, to replace an officer who had fallen ill.[27] In his account of the events of April 19 1775, Lister told how 'at this place [Concord's North Bridge] there was 4 Men of the 4th Company Killed who were afterwards scalp'd their Eyes goug'd their Noses and Ears cut off, such barbarity exercis'd upon the Corps could scarcely be paralleled by the most uncivilised Savages.'[28] Five soldiers likewise testified that they had seen 'a man belonging to the Light Company of the 4th regiment with the Skin over his Eye's cut and also the top part of his ears cut off.'[29]

The truth of the matter was likely somewhat less sinister. It has been argued that in reality a 'simple-minded youth' killed a soldier at North Bridge with the hasty stroke of an axe when the wounded man startled him.[30] The wound he caused 'resembled a scalping.'[31] Such an appearance could not have been better calculated to antagonise the soldiers – scalping was viewed by many as the height of Native savagery, and consequently a uniquely American form of barbarism that the soldiers now believed had been turned against them. Since colonisation 'Euro-American settlers… transformed a native practice [scalping] into a macabre tool of terror. They demonized Indians for doing something they regarded as unnatural, then adopted the practice themselves to overawe their enemies.'[32] The rumours told by the returning regulars, with all the implications of colonists abandoning the mores of their own "white civility" in exchange for brutal savagery, 'instantly changed the tone of the engagement… now a spirit of hatred began to grow. The thin

[26] Bruce VanSledright, *In Search of America's Past* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002), 170.
[27] Jeremy Lister, *Concord Fight: Being so much the Narrative of Ensign Jeremy Lister of the 10th Regiment of Foot as pertains to his services on the nineteenth of April, 1775, and to his experiences in Boston during the early months of the Siege* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1931), 22.
[28]Ibid, 27.
[29] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 407.
[30] Christopher Hibbert, *Redcoats and Rebels* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Military, 2008), 22.
[31] Michael Pearson, *Those Damned Rebels: The American Revolution as Seen Through British Eyes* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000), 407.
[32] Griffin, 'Destroying and Reforming Canaan' in *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy*, 41.

veneer of eighteenth-century civility was shattered by this one atrocity at the North Bridge.'[33]

As soon as the last of his scattered companies had arrived, Smith moved out of Concord, heading back to Boston. It was not long before they were again engaged by ever-increasing flocks of militia. Sharp fighting at places such as Meriam's Corner, Hardy's Hill, the Bloody Angle and Fiske Hill drained the regulars, the militia preferring to engage them at range and simply withdraw when threatened with reprisals. By the time the British got back to Lexington nearly all of their officers were dead or wounded, and the rank and file were exhausted, thirsty, outnumbered and had little ammunition left. Just when it seemed as though the column would disintegrate in panic, help arrived. Alerted by Smith's request for reinforcements that morning, Gage had dispatched Earl Percy and a second contingent of regulars to assist the first. They arrived in the vicinity of Lexington to loud cheers, and immediately fired a salvo from the two small cannons they had wheeled with them, an act that, while doing little physical damage to the scattered militia, shook their resolve.

Smith informed Percy of the nature of the fighting that had plagued them since Concord, and the column's new commander took appropriate steps to combat it. The formation was weighted more heavily on the flanks and rear, detachments were deployed to in turn outflank militia units striking at their sides, while a strong vanguard of marines cleared obstructions. Smith's exhausted troops were placed protectively in the centre, and as the British resumed their return to Boston Percy used the advantage of interior lines to rotate fresh units to the most beset areas. This kept the column together until it reached what was in effect its final challenge – the town of Menotomy.

The militia had heavily occupied the town and its surrounds, and it was only with great difficulty that the British fought their way through it, often having to go door to door. This part of the interior was more heavily populated than the areas of Lexington and Concord, with a greater number of homesteads and

[33] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 218.

taverns dotting the roadside. The militia occupied these buildings or, in some cases, defended their own homes from the passing regulars, who in turn responded with killing, looting and burning. A British officer later related how 'all that were found in the houses were put to death.'[34] Another gave a similar account - 'the soldiers were so enraged at suffering from an unseen enemy that they forced open many of the houses… and put to death all those found in them.'[35]

One particular event was later recounted as a prime example of excessive violence meted out by the British on the return march. Against the advice of more experienced militiamen, a group of Patriots set up an ambush close to the road in an orchard belonging to a local man, Jason Russell, who himself was killed on the doorstep of his home by the regulars. The militia found themselves ambushed by a group of British flankers. According to the account of one of the Patriots, Dennison Wallis, the militiamen surrendered, only for the British to begin summary executions. Wallis 'bolted for freedom when he realised he was about to be massacred.'[36] He was shot, but managed to make his escape. His account of the massacre in the orchard is the only one to exist, so its veracity is difficult to gauge, but it is supported by similar events throughout the day. In the house of Jason Russell, adjacent to the orchard, militia Lieutenant Gideon Foster claimed that three or four of his men were executed by the British after they had surrendered.[37] Such acts are corroborated by the reports mentioned of British officers describing how no quarter was given to those in the houses caught up in the fighting. As Fischer later stated, the Patriot scalping at Concord's North Bridge 'was repaid many times over in Jason Russell's orchard.'[38] It is clear that by the latter stages of the British return march, the fury of both sides had reached fever-pitch. It was at Menotomy, more so than any of the other flashpoints

[34] John Barker, 'A British Officer in Boston in 1775' in *The Atlantic Monthly, Volume 39, Issue 234* (Boston, April 1877), 400.
[35] Frederick Mackenzie, *A British Fusilier in Revolutionary Boston,* ed. Allen French (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 56.
[36] Fleming, *First Stroke*, 84.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 256.

along the road, that both the British and the Patriots suffered their highest casualties.

Civilians also suffered at the hands of the regulars. The owners of a tavern testified one month after the battle that two of their unarmed clients were ‘stabbed through in many places, their heads mauled, skulls broke and their brains out on the floor and the walls of the house’ by the regulars.[39] Similarly, Hannah Bradish, a woman at home with her infant child, complained that ‘at least seventy bullets were shot into the front part of the house’ by regulars on the way back from Lexington and Concord, and that they looted her property.[40]

The British engaged in yet more running battles beyond Menotomy, and may well have been completely overwhelmed were it not for Percy's tactical acumen. He chose to take the less direct route to Boston via Charlestown, instead of going through Cambridge, which was now seething with militia. The British soldiers limping into Charlestown would have been an image from Gage's worst nightmare. What a contrast their state was to what it had been just hours earlier, when they had obeyed the general's strict instructions to not harm private property or persons, helping to douse the accidental fire at the townhouse in Concord and even paying the townsfolk for food. Now they were laden with stolen goods, while behind them smoke rose from the plethora of buildings set alight by their rampaging progress. The Boston massacre had been a tragic accident. The perceived massacre at Lexington had escalated matters, but Concord and the return march, leaving behind a total of 88 casualties among the militia and 247 among the regulars, was nothing less than a declaration of war.

British and Colonial Responses to Narratives of Massacre

[39] Benjamin Cooper and Rachel Cooper, ‘Cambridge, May nineteenth, 1775’ in *A History of the Town of Concord, Middlesex County, Massachusetts*, ed. Lemuel Shattuck (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Company, 1835), 351.
[40] Hannah Bradish in *Journals of the American Congress from 1744 – 1788, in Four Volumes: Volume I* (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1823), 64.

Many colonists treated it as such. More so than the Boston shootings or the tea harbour incident of 1773, Lexington and Concord were everything some radicals had hoped for. The massacre at Lexington and the killings along the road afterwards presented them with the biggest opportunity yet to fight 'not with bayonets but broadsides, not with muskets but depositions, newspapers and sermons.'[41] The first phase of the war was now afoot, and the killings at Lexington and elsewhere on April 19 would fuel it, ultimately seeing the British forced out of Boston less than a year later. News of the clashes across the New England countryside travelled fast throughout the colonies as the Patriots rushed to have their version of events heard, repeating a process first put into practice on a larger scale following Boston in 1770. The atrocity narrative was soon in full flow – a total of 27 colonial periodicals reported on the day's fighting. The *Massachusetts Spy* was one of first to do so, its Patriot editors framing events in unequivocal terms:

> Americans! Forever bear in mind the BATTLE of LEXINGTON where British Troops, unmolested and unprovoked wantonly, and in the most inhuman manner fired upon and killed a number of our countrymen, then robbed them of their provisions, ransacked, plundered and burnt their houses! Nor could the tears of defenceless women, some of whom were in the pains of childbirth, the cries of helpless babes, nor the prayers of old age, confined to beds of sickness, appease their thirst for blood - or divert them from the DESIGN of MURDER and ROBBERY![42]

It is interesting that, while stressing the burning and pillaging, and even claiming the regulars harmed pregnant women and young children, the *Spy* still very specifically calls Lexington a battle. Such a distinction was important because battles are not events pertaining to civil unrest or riots – they are specifically an act of war. With the militia now bottling up the regulars in Boston, New England was in a state of open conflict. As the *Hampshire Gazette* reported on April 21 1775, 'the sword is now drawn.'[43] The *Spy* was

[41] Ibid, 279.
[42] *Massachusetts Spy*, Worcester, Mass., May 3, 1775, 3
[43] *The New Hampshire Gazette and Historical Chronicle*, Volume 29, Number 965, Portsmouth, April 21st 1775, 1.

also reprinted Benjamin Franklin's French and Indian War slogans "Liberty or Death" and "Join or Die," an unmistakable call to unity as the Thirteen Colonies plunged into direct conflict with Great Britain.

Printed commentary was not the only weapon employed by the Patriots in the weeks and months that followed. Religious sermons also frequently preached resistance or even outright rebellion to their congregations. Even March 5 congregants in New England gathered to recall the Boston killings of 1770 and 'commemorate the bloody and horrid massacre perpetrated by a party of soldiers.'[44] Following the battle at Bunker Hill, two months after Lexington and Concord, one British newspaper spoke of how 'thirty of the Provincials who were taken prisoner, and brought to Boston, desired to be shot, but were confined in a prison... they declared they were led on entirely by their ministers enforcing the doctrine of resistance.'[45] Gage himself directly accused ministers of fomenting and promoting massacre, writing as part of a declaration on June 12 that 'to complete the horrid profanation of terms and of ideas, the name of God has been introduced into the pulpits, to excite and justify devastation and massacre.'[46]

Justices of the peace, almost all of them Patriots by mid-1775, also collected the depositions of eyewitnesses capable of reporting on the events of April 19, especially among the militia. It must have appeared to Crown officers and officials as though the entire apparatus of colonial life had been turned towards rebellion. On April 23 the Provincial Congress appointed a committee to draw up what it specifically referred to as a 'narrative of the massacre.'[47] The depositions taken from the militiamen who resisted the British regulars 'were recorded for the specific purpose of proving that British

[44] Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, 296.
[45] *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, Volume 24, Number 1209, Edinburgh, August 1st 1775, 6.
[46] Thomas Gage, 'A Proclamation' in *The Scots Magazine*, *Volume 37*, ed. James Boswell (Edinburgh: A. Murray and J. Cochran, 1775), 374.
[47] Abraham Tomlinson, *The Military Journals of Two Private Soldiers* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Abraham Tomlinson, 1855), 93.

soldiers fired the first shots at Lexington Green and Concord's North Bridge.'[48]

This they did. According to mass of testimonies, the British definitely fired first, and even then only after the militia were dispersing. Elijah Saunderson, for example, talks about how the Lexington militia were dispersing and 'did not fire a gun' before the regulars attacked them.[49] Thomas Rice Willard said the militia were dispersing, and 'there was not a gun fired till the militia of Lexington were dispersed.'[50] John Robins said that the militia began to disperse at the orders of the British, and 'Captain Parker's men I believe had not then fired a gun.'[51] Simon Winslip said that 'there was no discharge of arms on either side till the word fire was given' by a British officer.[52] Fourteen other militiamen issued a joint statement that the militia 'began to Disperse when the Regulars fired on the Company before a gun was fired by any of our company on them.'[53] Interestingly British prisoners also had depositions taken by the Patriots. One, Edward Thoroton Gould, agreed that the militia were dispersing when the action at Lexington began, but claimed he could not tell who had fired first.[54] Another prisoner, John Bateman, said he had heard an officer order the regulars to fire, and that 'I never heard any of the inhabitants so much as fire a gun on the said troops.'[55]

It was this narrative of injured innocence, similar to the one used in Boston in 1770, that combined with a desire for local recognition to lead the residents of Concord to argue that Lexington had been a massacre rather than a battle. Ezra Ripley, a nineteenth-century champion of the claim that Concord was

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[48] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 346.
[49] Elijah Saunderson in *A History of the Fight at Concord*, ed. Ezra Ripley (Concord, MA: Herman Atwill, 1832), 37.
[50] Thomas Rice Willard in *A History of the Fight at Concord*, ed. Ezra Ripley (Concord, MA: Herman Atwill, 1832), 38.
[51] John Robins in *Journals of the American Congress from 1744 – 1788, in Four Volumes: Volume I* (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1823), 60.
[52] Simon Winslip in *Journals of the American Congress from 1744 – 1788, in Four Volumes: Volume I* (Washington: Way and Gideon, 1823), 59.
[53] Ripley, *The Fight at Concord*, 38.
[54] Edward Thoroton Gould in *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events*, ed. Thomas Pownall (London: J. Almon, 1775), 38.
[55] John Bateman in *A History of the Fight at Concord*, ed. Ezra Ripley (Concord, MA: Herman Atwill, 1832), 38.

the first spot of true resistance, used the depositions to ask why the militia did 'not say we saw and heard several guns fired on the British *after* they had fired on us.'[56] Ezra found no evidence of resistance in the depositions at all, and cited an address by the Provincial Congress heavily implying the first opposition to British arms was at Concord, not Lexington.[57] This generated the response from Lexington, where 'outraged citizens… responded by collecting depositions from surviving militiamen in their town, who now testified that the first American shots were fired not at Concord's North Bridge but on Lexington's village green' – contrary to what they had claimed decades earlier. [58]

The later semantics of massacre and battle were not pressing concerns for the Provincial Congress when drawing up its narration of the massacre in 1775. The depositions, each toeing a similar descriptive line, were drawn together into a document entitled *A Narrative of the Excursion and Ravages of the King's Troops*. Aware that Gage had already sent his version of events to London, the Patriots dispatched the *Narrative* across the Atlantic by a faster ship, along with a letter addressed to the British people complaining of the events at Lexington and Concord and telling how 'a great number of the houses on the road were plundered… several were burnt; women in child-bed were driven, by the soldiery, naked into the streets; old men peaceably in their houses were shot dead.'[59] The Patriot's efforts beat Gage's account to London and caused a storm in the British press. The Stamford Mercury, for example, wrote on June 1 1775 of:

> The massacre already attempted to be put in execution in New-England… the event of the first ministerial experiment of coercion and the sword, already begin to stagger the wavering and undecided Englishmen (for Scotsmen are out of the question) horror, consternation, and resentment, were strongly painted on the countenances of every honest man in London

[56] Ripley, *A History of the Fight at Concord* (Concord, MA: Herman Atwill, 1832), 39
[57] Ibid.
[58] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 329.
[59] Joseph Warren, 'To the Inhabitants of Great-Britain' in *Journals of the American Congress from 1744 – 1788, in Four Volumes: Volume I* (Washington DC: Way and Gideon, 1823), 66 - 67.

> yesterday, on the receipt of the melancholy news from America.[60]

With even government ministers initially blaming Gage – rather than their own failed policies – 'the ensuing contest for popular opinion was an epic disaster for the British government, and a triumph for the Patriots.'[61] Massacre had once more been put to excellent use by the Patriots.

The official British response was mixed. On the one hand, British and Loyalist publications tended to try and play down the importance of the day's events or claim that there were so many divergent reports in the immediate aftermath that it was impossible to give a single, true narrative of what had happened. For example the *Boston News-Letter*, whose editors were Loyalists, stated that 'the Reports concerning this Unhappy Affair... are so various that we... cannot therefore with certainty give our Readers any further Account of this shocking Introduction to all the Miseries of a Civil War.'[62] Here again we see the reference to all-out war rather than a riot or a disturbance. It is also important that the *News-Letter* identified it especially as a civil war. One need only look at the place titles to understand that this was, at its heart, a fratricidal conflict right from the beginning - militiamen from towns with names like Chelmsford, Reading, Sudbury and Tewksbury were attacking soldiers from regiments raised in the vicinity of Lancaster, Lincoln and Stafford. Apocryphal or not, one New Englander was said to have called upon his neighbours to help him defend his home from the regulars by paraphrasing Shakespeare, stating 'an Englishman's home is his castle.'[63] Boston and Massachusetts, steeped in the revolutionary heritage of seventeenth-century England, saw themselves as the true inheritors of those ancient rights and liberties, more English than the English themselves.

For their own part the British chose to push the story later recounted by Ensign Lister, of the British soldiers scalped and tortured on Concord's North

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[60] *The Stamford Mercury*, Stamford, Lincolnshire, Issue No. 2309, June 1 1775, 3.
[61] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 273 – 279.
[62] *Boston Newsletter*, Boston, Mass, April 20, 1775, 3
[63] Fischer, Paul Revere's Ride, 256.

Bridge. The Ensign was not the only one to record rumours regarding the incident. On April 28 another British officer described how the militia was 'very numerous, and as bad as the Indians for scalping and cutting the dead men's ears and noses off, and those they get alive, that are wounded, and cannot get off the ground.'[64] Letters regarding such atrocities criss-crossed the Atlantic. One, penned by Loyalist Bostonian Ann Hulton to a friend in England, claimed the British had 'found two or three of their people lying in the agonies of death, scalped and their noses and ears cut off and eyes bored out, which exasperated the soldiers exceedingly.'[65] The British press also took the opportunity to vilify the colonists, writing lurid accounts of the incident while repudiating colonial claims of British violence:

> Two soldiers who lay wounded on the field, and had been scalped by the savage provincials, were still breathing… Near these unfortunate men, another dreadful object presented itself. A soldier who had been slightly wounded, appeared with his eyes torn out of their sockets, by the barbarous mode of googing, a word and practice peculiar to the Americans… The rebels, to break the force of accusation, began to recriminate. They laid several instances of wanton cruelty to the charge of the troops: yet nothing is better ascertained, than that not one of the soldiers ever quitted the road, either upon their march or return from Concord.[66]

Another British article written in 1776, presenting an angry series of rebuttals to the text of the Declaration of Independence, recalled how colonists 'carried into the field the same thirst for torturing, which they had not been able to satiate in their towns. Their humanity is written in indelible characters with the blood of the soldiers scalped and googed at Lexington.'[67] Gage himself seized on such rumours, claiming in a broadside that his men had 'observed

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[64] 'Intercepted Letters' in *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in 1774 and 1775 and of the Committee of Safety*, ed. William Lincoln (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 682

[65] Ann Hulton, 'Letter to Mrs Adam Lightbody' in *English Historical Documents: American Colonial Documents to 1776* edited by M. Jensen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 830.

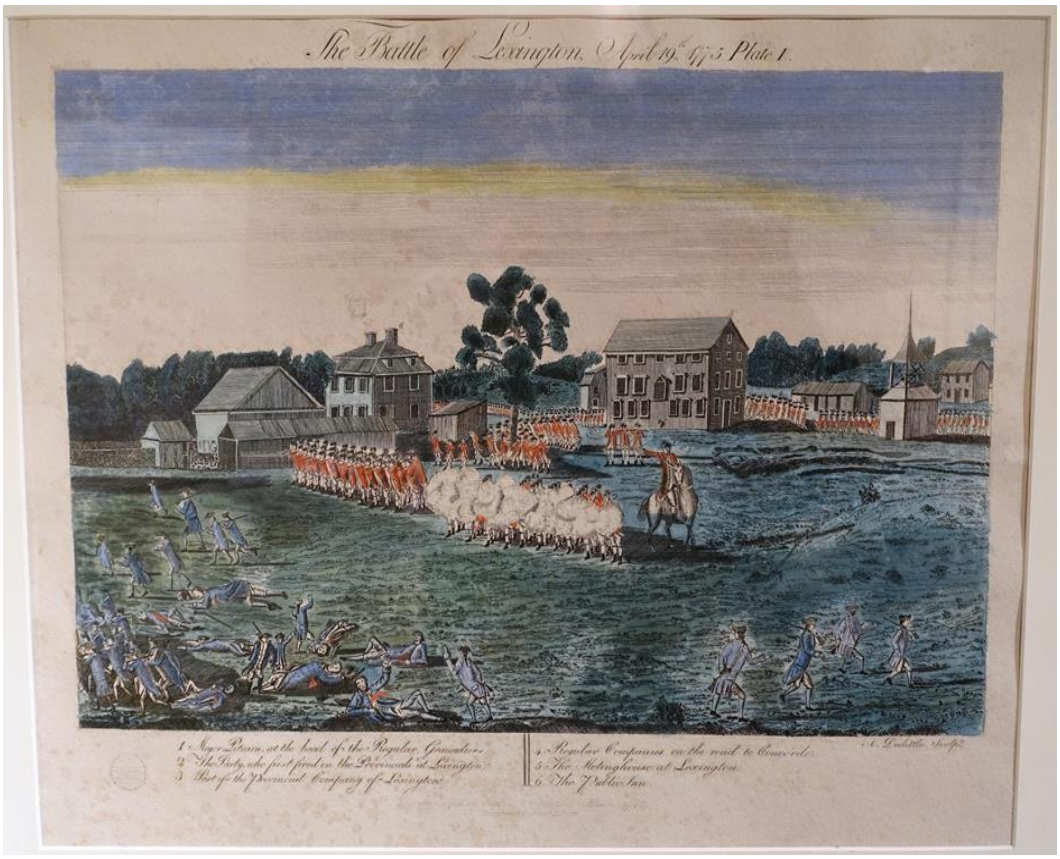
[66] 'Britain's Rights Against America's Claims' in *The Scots Magazine*, *Volume 38*, ed. James Boswell (Edinburgh: A. Murray and J. Cochran, 1776), 126.

[67] 'An Answer to the Declaration of Independence' in *The Scots Magazine*, *Volume 39*, ed. James Boswell (Edinburgh: A. Murray and J. Cochran, 1777), 237.

three Soldiers on the Ground one of them scalped, his Head much mangled, and his Ears cut off, tho' not quite dead; a Sight which struck the Soldiers with horror.'[68] It is interesting to note that Gage speaks of a single victim, while the other sources generally claim three or four, but the core of the tale remains. British officials deliberately 'spoke in echoes of the Monogahela and Fort William Henry.'[69]

While the full veracity of the account is impossible to establish, it is noteworthy that Patriot authorities considered the scalping story serious enough to suppress. Depositions that mentioned such irregularities were returned to their senders by committees collecting accounts from the militia.[70] While eager to promote the idea that Lexington and Concord constituted the beginning of a fully-fledged, armed conflict, the radicals were still wise enough to try and maintained their status as victims, as they had in Boston in 1770, talking of 'a slaughter of American innocents' that 'strengthened the moral foundations of the American side.'[71] The first images of the engagement to appear, Amos Doolittle's four representations of the battle and its aftermath, show the militia scattering in terror before the regulars on Lexington Green, and being cut down. Likewise, another of his engravings showed houses in flames as the British column passed by. Doolittle was himself a militiaman, and spent some months interviewing eyewitnesses for his work. His efforts helped the established narrative that would be used through the entire course of the war. In his view, as well as in the view of many of those actually present, 'Lexington had been not a battle, or even a skirmish, but an execution.'[72]

[68] Thomas Gage, *A Circumstantial Account of an Attack that Happened on the nineteenth of April 1775, on his Majesty's Troops* (Boston: Broadside Printed by John Howe, 1775).
[69] Dowd, *Groundless*, 169.
[70] Fischer, Paul Revere's Ride, 327.
[71] Ibid, 328.
[72] Rick Atkinson, *The British Are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2019), 51.



The Battle of Lexington by Amos Doolittle[73]

[73] Wikipedia Commons. Plate I, The Battle of Lexington, Amos Doolittle engravings of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, December 1775, reprint by Charles E. Goodspeed, Boston, 1903 - Concord Museum - Concord, MA - DSC05585.JPG. Accessed online on 06/11/2018 at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plate_I,_The_Battle_of_Lexington,_Amos_Doolittle_engravings_of_the_Battle_of_Lexington_and_Concord,_December_1775,_reprint_by_Charles_E._Goodspeed,_Boston,_1903_-_Concord_Museum_-_Concord,_MA_-_DSC05585.JPG.

A View of the South Part of Lexington by Amos Doolittle[74]

From Massacre to Battle

Lexington was a battle only insomuch as it promoted the idea of a war. The primary accounts had no issue with also describing it as a massacre, something that directly motivated Patriots to attack the British column later on that very day. Militiaman William Tay, for example, described himself as 'being deeply touched with their [the regular's] bloody massacre and inhuman murders in their march at Lexington' and went on to describe:

> Cruelties to our aged fathers, and poor, helpless, bed-ridden women under the infirmities of child-bearing; together with their horrible devastations committed on their ignominious retreat the

[74] Wikipedia Commons. Plate IV, A View of South Lexington, Amos Doolittle engravings of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, December 1775, reprint by Charles E. Goodspeed, Boston, 1903 - Concord Museum - Concord, MA - DSC05587.JPG. Accessed online on 06/11/2018 at https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/47/Plate_IV%2C_A_View_of_South_Lexington%2C_Amos_Doolittle_engravings_of_the_Battle_of_Lexington_and_Concord%2C_December_1775%2C_reprint_by_Charles_E._Goodspeed%2C_Boston%2C_1903_-_Concord_Museum_-_Concord%2C_MA_-_DSC05587.JPG

> same day, (shocking to relate, but more so to behold,) to the eternal infamy of those British arms.[75]

These accounts would rally tens of thousands of colonists to the rebellion in the months following Lexington, fuelling the force that successfully laid siege to Boston and thereby defining the first twelve months of the war. Interestingly though, the outraged claims of massacre that so effectively motivated the Patriots in 1775 began to change in the decades following the war, when the driving need was no longer to portray the colonists as innocent victims, but became more centred on the creation of national identity and the importance of American martial resistance. Artwork followed in the wake of public perception, changing over time as the view of the first shots also shifted. Now when describing what happened, aging veterans who had been at Lexington claimed they had fought back, rather than simply scattered. Thanks to this, engravings and prints increasingly showed the militia engaging the regulars toe-to-toe.[76] One artist, François Godefroy, produced an engraving at an unknown date prior to 1819 that encapsulated the shift in perception. Gone was Doolittle's limited engagement and fleeing militiamen, replaced by the serried ranks of hundreds of soldiers, fully uniformed and, incredibly, even wheeling two large cannons. The two sides exchange disciplined musket volleys while homesteads are fully ablaze. The engraving could not be more removed from the realities of the encounter at Lexington.[77] [78]

Despite this, nineteenth-century artists continued to press the idea of a formal engagement, changing the tone of the initial claims of massacre. The 'Fight at Lexington,' published around 1860, showed militiamen in uniform.[79]

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[75] William Tay, 'No, 4. - Petition of William Tay' in *History of the Siege of Boston, and the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill*, ed. Richard Frothingham (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), 368.
[76] Ibid, 329.
[77] The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. "Journée de Lexington." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-f30b-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99
[78] For copies of the images mentioned, see the end of the chapter.
[79] Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "The fight at Lexington, April 19, 1775--from a print of the time." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed

The ‘Affair at Lexington’, from 1850, portrayed vicious hand to hand fighting.[80] The tellingly-named ‘Lexington Massacre,’ produced in 1876, shows disciplined ranks of redcoats delivering steady musket fire into well-attired Patriots.[81] While inaccuracies concerning historical subjects are hardly unusual in the nineteenth century, such art is a valuable indicator of how the public perceived the opening shots of the Revolution, and harks back to the vigorous debate between the towns of Lexington and Concord themselves. When the word “massacre” was so ill-defined, context and perception meant everything, and artistic process followed on naturally from other works of commemoration, written and spoken. As Sarah Purcell noted in her study of memory and the American Revolution, ‘writers, preachers, and participants in public celebrations created images of sanitized violence and sacrifice… As a sentimentalized picture of violence helped to build the ideas of consensus around American heroism, layers of cultural convention masked the horror of war.’[82]

The issue of who fired first also fed into the debate on memory. In the majority of colonial narratives, and all of Congress's depositions, the British shot first, mounting an attack on a people who supposedly did not desire conflict, but were willing to defend themselves if necessary. In the primary accounts, the militia then fled and were massacred. In the later retellings, the militia offered resistance before being forced to scatter. Both versions would be used at different times and for different purposes, the first to stoke outrage throughout the Thirteen Colonies in 1775, the second to give the newly founded United States a courageous and morally upstanding origin story.

October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-f557-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

[80] Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "Affair at Lexington." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-f516-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

[81] Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "The Lexington Massacre." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-f50d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

[82] Purcell, *Sealed with Blood*, 15.

The switch from massacre to battle became even more understandable when considering the importance of foundational narratives in the later perception of the revolution. Those 'who actually did the fighting in 1775 had cultivated an image of themselves as innocent and even passive victims of British aggression. The next generation remembered them in a very different way – as bold, active, and defiant defenders of home and hearth.'[83] This change, while applied to the narrative of the whole war, was crystallised most clearly around the cradle of the revolution, in New England. The narrative switch from helpless victims to bold martyrs is starkest when the champions of Lexington began claiming that a spirited resistance, rather than the base massacre, characterised their fight. As Neil L. York has written regarding muddled later testimonies about the Boston massacre, 'memory is often formed as part of a quest for a usable past, one that teaches us lessons.'[84] The embattled farmers of Emerson's 1836 *Concord Hymn* fitted the role of noble heroism and sacrifice invoked by the popular memory of New England's radicals.

The idea of gallant, homespun defiance was further cemented by the battle of Bunker Hill, two months later, when the regulars won only the most pyrrhic of victories. After the Patriots occupied the heights overlooking Boston, the British mounted a faltering assault on their freshly entrenched positions. The classical view of the battle sees the king's soldiers marching doggedly into a storm of fire, throwing away frontal assaults and only taking the position after the Patriots had expended their ammunition. In reality the British attacks struggled because General Howe diluted his frontal assaults with repeated flanking efforts - only when abandoning tactical nuance and committing to a frontal attack did the British actually make it to the Patriot earthworks. After driving the Patriots off, Howe displayed the hesitation that would make him infamous, failing to push on into Cambridge. During the battle a Royal Navy bombardment also set light to nearby Charlestown, an act that further portrayed the Crown's authority as destructive and brutal, and led to inflated

[83] Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride*, 329.
[84] York, *The Boston Massacre*, 223.

reports claiming that ‘many people who had got up to the tops of houses, steeples, &c to see the engagement, were burnt to death, and the whole exhibited a scene of horror which cannot be described.’[85]

Nor did the actions of the British immediately after the battle endear them. Not only did the thirty-one Patriot prisoners taken to Boston seemingly barely escape being shot out of hand, but over the next three months twenty of them died in captivity.[86] The specific causes are not listed, but the news prompted a formal complaint from George Washington. While the conditions the prisoners were living in are not known, there are definite instances of British officers abusing Patriot prisoners immediately after Bunker Hill.[87]

The effect of Bunker Hill and the ensuing siege of Boston was widely felt. The idea that the Patriots were not committed to rebellion, and made for poor soldiers compared to trained professionals, had been entirely disabused. In reality the king's forces had stood in the open before the breastworks being shot down because of the inexperience of officers in forming columns or keeping their men going forward, rather than letting them pause to fire ineffective, long-ranged volleys.[88] This contributed to the idea espoused by Loyalist Peter Oliver, who wrote of ‘English courage, of standing undaunted in open field to be shot at.’[89] Despite taking the hill, the days of the British in Boston were numbered. The massacre Lexington and the subsequent running battles had cost them the city. As a nineteenth-century historian put it, Boston ‘was surrounded by multitudes of armed men, exasperated to the last degree by the recent destruction and massacre.’[90]

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[85] *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, Volume 24, Number 1209, Edinburgh, August 1st 1775, 70.
[86] William R. Lindsey, *Treatment of American Prisoners of War During the Revolution* (Emproia, KA: Kansas State Teachers College, 1969), 8.
[87] Matthew H. Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775 – 1783* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 126.
[88] Ibid, 218 - 219.
[89] Peter Oliver, *Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View*, eds. Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), 132.
[90] Richard Frothingham *History of the Siege of Boston, and the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill*, (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), 93.

Yet again, the Patriots attempted to blindside the opposition by sending depositions describing their view of Bunker Hill to London. For once Gage was ahead of them, but news of the cost of the British victory still shocked the establishment. The hardening of British attitudes after the battle saw the last genuine hopes for peace slip away. The Patriots, meanwhile, took heart from their stand, and Bunker Hill became, like Lexington and Concord, a keystone of the revolutionary story. The first phase of the war, triggered and fuelled by an act of massacre, had been won by the Patriots.

The Art of Bunker Hill and Narratives of Violence

The place of Bunker Hill in the historical memory of the United States was further enhanced by the efforts of the artist John Trumbull. Alongside the various images of Lexington that developed throughout the nineteenth century, there are few more iconic portrayals of the American Revolution than Trumbull's *The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker Hill*. Trumbull, who had himself been a soldier during the Revolutionary War, actually painted two versions, the first between 1815 and 1831, and a second, larger copy in 1834. He was present at the battle in 1775, albeit as a young, distant observer. His version of Warren's death - the leading revolutionary was killed by a musket ball to the head as the militia withdrew following the final British assault - goes out of its way to depict a caste of well-known British and Patriot individuals. Front and centre is the mortally wounded Warren, while over him a British officer, Colonel Small, is stopping one of his grenadiers administering a bayonet stab to the dying Patriot. Behind them Major Pitcairn, who battled through the fighting at Lexington and Concord, is shown mortally wounded in the arms of his son, Lieutenant Pitcairn, while behind them generals Howe and Clinton are portrayed in the thick of the fighting, swords raised.

The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775 by John Trumbull.[91]

Artistic licence can be used to explain away the fact that Howe and Clinton were certainly not on the front lines of the battle (though Howe was close enough to end up with an aide's blood on his breeches), or that Pitcairn and Warren were killed in different places in the battle for the hill. Of greater interest is the sanitisation of the conflict. There is almost no blood in evidence anywhere. Like many of the later nineteenth-century depictions of Lexington and Concord, the militia are clad in romanticised colonial garb, ruffled shirts open and feathers caught in the breeze. The grenadier seeking to stab a

[91] Wikipedia Commons. "The Death of General Warren at the Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775," 1834 by John Trumbull. 184.2 x 274.5 cm Oil on canvas Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT. Accessed online on 06/12/2016 at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Death_of_General_Warren_at_the_Battle_of_Bunker's_Hill,_June_17,_1775#/media/File:The_Death_of_General_Warren_at_the_Battle_of_Bunker%27s_Hill,_June_17,_1775.jp

defenceless Warren is being restrained by his own officer, and another grenadier behind the first is also having his musket thrust stopped by a warding hand. The very point of the painting is to portray both the sublime glory attained with military martyrdom, and the mercy of mutually honourable combatants - in describing why he chose to depict Small acting the way he did, Trumbull said that his 'conduct in America was equally distinguished by acts of humanity and kindness to his enemies, as by bravery and fidelity to the cause he served.'[92] Warren is seen 'with a smile of mingled gratitude and triumph'[93] on his peaceful and - given he was shot in the head - unblemished face. Interestingly, Trumbull also accounts for the seemingly savage act of the grenadier, he who 'in the heat and fury natural at such a moment, aims to revenge the death of a favourite officer.'[94]

Here we see the frenzy and confusion of battle defeated by the genteel civility sometimes connected with the eighteenth century - an ideology that was largely born and bred from nineteenth-century works like Trumbull's, and reflected the 'ideal of disinterested virtue that formed the backbone of both American republicanism and English gentility.'[95] Gone, then is the true savagery of the event, the violence of massacre that faded as the nineteenth century progressed. In Purcell's words, for Trumbull the most important thing was that he 'expressed artistic gratitude to American military men as a means of stressing the common bonds that the Revolution had created among far-flung members of the American nation.'[96] The atrocity narrative, no longer relevant, has been discarded.

For the catalogue of his paintings, Trumbull gives a brief, potted history of both Bunker Hill and the wider revolution. He makes no effort to hide any bias, describing the revolution as something that 'will forever remain, the

[92] John Trumbull, *Catalogue of Paintings by Colonel Trumbull* (New-Haven: J. Peck, 1835), 10.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Margot Minardi, *Making Slavery History: Abolitionism and the Politics of Memory of Massachusetts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 50.
[96] Purcell, Sealed with Blood, 55.

most interesting period of human history.'[97] Trumbull's work is an example of the nineteenth-century effort to cleanse the revolution of its most violent and shocking aspects. It goes so far in its efforts that even the British, the monsters of Patriot propaganda in 1775, are granted a humane side. The distance between Trumbull's narrative in his painting catalogue and the accounts of the battle are about as far apart as Doolittle's initial depictions of April 19 1775, and the nineteenth century reproductions of the action on Lexington Green. In the safe, comfortable memorialisation of the nation's founding, American citizens did not wish to dwell on excessive bloodshed, extreme violence or summary killings, but looked instead to the noble defiance and sacrifice of the simple, honest folks they believed embodied the American spirit.

Such a view was certainly not shared by most Americans in 1775. In recounting Lexington, the revolutionaries repeated the stance they'd adopted after the Boston shootings, and developed the part of the victim. The myth of injured innocence benefited the Patriots more than an image of bold – perhaps even overly antagonistic – defiance prior to the first shots. It suited Congress to portray the fighting after Lexington as a response to an unlawful massacre, rather than part of a premeditated plan that had been laid to help deal with the powder alarm incidents. As it had done in Boston in 1770, the Whiggish press in the colonies reacted brilliantly to the day's events, seizing the initiative and constructing an empathetic narrative that it was even able to market to the very people it was proposing to fight. The idea of Lexington as a massacre played an integral part in that narrative.

Lexington helped to move the Patriots into a new phase of revolutionary activity. Now the violence administered by Crown Forces could be followed not just with depositions and public outcry, but with retaliatory violence. Lexington was the last 'massacre of innocents' prior to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. The fact that 'at Lexington the farmers were clearly the victims, while at Concord they were not' shows how, within hours, the idea of

[97] Trumbull, *Catalogue of Paintings*, 7.

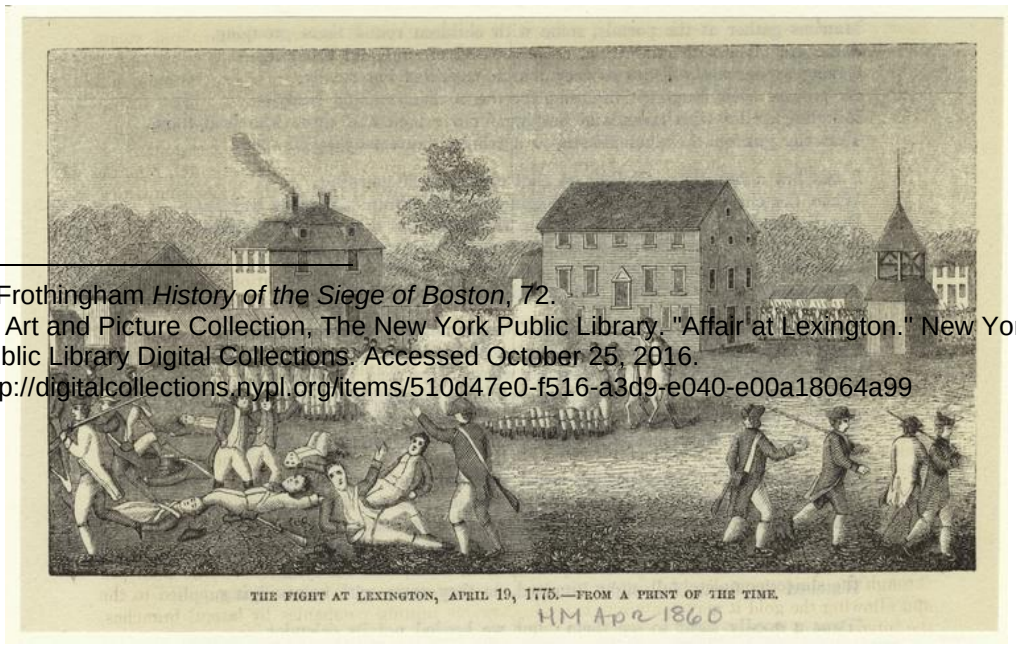
a massacre had helped galvanise armed conflict.[98] In the same way that the massacre of 1770 acted as a step along the road to conflict, so Lexington provided an immediate, short-term spark.

It is interesting to consider just how Lexington, so associated with armed struggle, was not so far out of line with the Boston massacre, which was conversely synonymous with the killing of innocents. If anything the Boston event represented a greater danger to the regulars present, hugely outnumbered and surrounded as they were by a violent and antagonistic mob. At Lexington the regulars held every advantage, were faced with a cowed and likely dispersing enemy, and suffered scarcely more harm than the beaten soldiers did in Boston in 1770. In this light it seems as though the claims of the people of Concord, that the action at Lexington constituted a massacre rather than a battle, are true enough. And yet, going by the claims of the residents of Lexington, the scattering on the green supposedly represents the first battle of the revolution. Here then the core idiosyncrasies of massacre – with claim and counter-claim – are played out. We see how the initial status of a specific massacre is almost wholly dependent on time, context, and who is making the claim. We also see how the event turns not necessarily on the agency of its actors, but on the desires of those who remember and memorialise it. As the status of the massacre became disputed in the nineteenth-century the actions of the Lexington militia become emboldened, stripping away their victimhood and, in doing so, unintentionally also stripping away the shock and the horror that accompanied the first open fight between British soldiers and their American colonists. Works such as Longfellow's tale about Revere, or Emmerson's poem, or Trumbull's heroic, sanitised version of Bunker Hill, sterilised the violence portrayed in accounts like the militia depositions. Lexington and Concord, once described as 'the places of bloodshed and massacre,' set the standard for the later removal of the Revolutionary War's massacre narratives and the loss of focus on its bloodier, more fratricidal elements. Understanding this is key to

[98] Raphael, *Founding Myths*, 76.

understanding both the revolution's place in the public consciousness throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, and also grasping the importance of other claims of massacre that grew up – and were hotly contested – throughout the conflict.[99]

Affair at Lexington by Benjamin Franklin Wiatt (1850)[100]



[99] Frothingham *History of the Siege of Boston*, 72.
[100] Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "Affair at Lexington." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-f516-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

The fight at Lexington, April 19, 1775--from a print of the time[101]

[101] Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "The fight at Lexington, April 19, 1775--from a print of the time." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-f557-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

The Lexington Massacre.[102]

Journée de Lexington.[103]

[102] Art and Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "The Lexington Massacre." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-f50d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

[103] The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. "Journée de Lexington." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47da-f30b-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

Chapter Three: Paoli and Tappan

> A few months after this, a most inhuman massacre took place near Tapaan in New-Jersey… The 33d regiment, to which I belonged, was about three miles off when the cruel carnage began; but as we approached, the shrieks and screams of the hapless victims whom our savage fellow soldiers were butchering, were sufficient to have melted into compassion the heart of a Turk or a Tartar. Tongue cannot tell nor pen unfold the horrors of that dismal night… Let Britain boast no more of her honour, her scince [sic] and civilization; but with shame hide her head in the dust; her fame is gone; Tapaan will witness against her. Having performed this ignoble exploit, the few prisoners that were spared being conducted to New-York by a guard of British soldiers, and the wounded sent off in waggons, we returned to Long-Island to be ready for another scene of British barbarity.[1]

This account of what became known variously as the Baylor massacre or the Tappan massacre was written by John Robert Shaw, formerly a regular soldier in the British Army's 33rd Regiment of Foot. The events he described became immediately infamous – on a cold October night in 1778 a force of British soldiers surrounded a regiment of Continental Army dragoons billeted near Tappan in New Jersey and, while they slept, launched a vicious bayonet attack. Accusations of massacre followed, and not only from Patriot sources.

Shaw's account is particularly interesting for several reasons. Unlike the large amounts of correspondence generated by the British Army's officer corps, the writings of enlisted men from the period are relatively few and far between. Shaw's view is even more unique given that later in the war he chose to desert, was captured and ended up fighting for the Patriots before ultimately settling in Kentucky. While considering that he wrote his account long after having settled in America, it does seem he is genuinely shocked and disgusted by the bloodshed he witnessed at Tappan. Nor was he the only one. British officers censured the troops involved in the incident, while one former Loyalist, Thomas Jones, damned the perpetrators in his historical

[1] John Robert Shaw, *A Narrative of the Life and Travels of John Robert Shaw, the Well-Digger, Now Resident in Lexington, Kentucky* (Lexington, KY: Daniel Bradford, 1807), 20 – 21.

account of the Revolution in New York, writing that before the Patriots at Tappan could arm themselves 'the whole corps (a few who concealed themselves excepted) were massacred in cold blood, and to the disgrace of Britons many of them were stabbed while upon their knees humbly imploring and submissively begging for mercy.'[2]

This chapter's primary focus is on the engagements at Paoli in 1777 and Tappan in 1778. In addressing their similarities it seeks to highlight the disparity in the operational abilities between British and Patriot forces in the mid-point of the war, why British forces became involved in heightening acts of battlefield aggression, and how massacres had a direct impact on tactics and morale in larger battles. The broad theme of this chapter, the concept of "regular-on-regular" violence, also brings into focus the numerous smaller-scale massacres of 1777 and 1778, such as Drake's Farm, Little Egg Harbor and Crooked Billet.

The massacre at Tappan in 1778 shocked even hardened campaigners like Robert Shaw, but it was far from the only incident of extreme battlefield violence that took place during the midpoint of the Revolutionary War. In particular, the years 1777 and 1778 were marked by a disproportionate number of massacres committed by regular soldiers in the Crown Forces. Senior commanders and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic worried that the level of violence being generated by the conflict was getting out of control. Other atrocities and violations of the eighteenth-century rules of war were also on the rise – the mistreatment of women, for example, was appearing with increasing frequency in the years 1776 and 1777. Francis Rawdon, a young Irish peer who distinguished himself in the northern campaigns and was later given a number of commands in the south, wrote a letter to his uncle in Britain which made light of multiple counts of rape by British soldiers in 1776:

[2] Thomas Jones, *History of New York during The Revolutionary War, and of the Leading Events in the Other Colonies at that Period*, *Volume 1*, ed. Edward Floyd De Lancey (New York: New York Historical Society, 1879), 286.

> The fair nymphs of this isle [Staten Island] are in wonderful tribulation, as the fresh meat our men have got here has made them as riotous as satyrs. A girl cannot step into the bushes to pluck a rose without running the most imminent risk of being ravished… a woman who having been forced by seven of our men, [came] to make a complaint to me "not of their usage," she said; "No, thank God, she despised that," but of their having taken an old prayer book… A girl on this island made a complaint the other day to Lord Percy of her being deflowered, as she said, by some grenadiers. Lord Percy asked her how she knew them to be grenadiers, as it happened in the dark. "Oh, good God," cried she, "they could be nothing else, and if your Lordship will examine I am sure you will find it so."[3]

It has been speculated that the rise in aggression following 1776 was fuelled by the fact that 'the British were frustrated by a series of narrow American victories that made the possibility of a short war impossible, and the soldiers released their anger on the local population.'[4] Friends and family members of victims also frequently suffered during these assaults, and at times were made to bear witness to them. Rape and sexual assault perpetrated on colonial women by British soldiers, especially in the years mentioned, certainly 'occurred in more than isolated instances,' and was subsequently seized upon as part of by-now now well-established Patriot 'atrocity narrative.'[5] The general increase in aggression by Crown Forces, typified in engagements during campaigns like the forage war of 1777 and subsequent accounts of massacres at places like Drake's Farm, seemed to confirm to participants at the time that the entire conflict was spiralling out of control.[6]

The British Army, battle-hardened and jaded by over two years of colonial warfare, was now conducting ever-more aggressive operations where elite troops expressed confidence in their own abilities and a disdain towards their enemies by perpetrating ruthless attacks on them. Unable to answer

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[3] Francis Rawdon, 'Francis, Lord Rawdon, to Francis, tenth Earl of Huntington. Staten Island, near New York, August 5, 1776' in *The Spirit of Seventy-six: The Story Of The American Revolution As Told By Participants*, eds. Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (Indianapolis, NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1954), 423 – 424.
[4] Dorothy A. Mays, *Women in Early America: Struggle, Survival and Freedom in a New World* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 35.
[5] Holger Hoock, '*Jus In Bello*' in *Journal of Military Ethics*, 88.
[6] Ibid, 87.

militarily, the Patriots instead pursued the same strategies they had in 1770 and 1775 – highlighting British aggression and emphasising their role as victims of imperial brutality. In doing so they showed a far better grasp of the nature of the conflict than British commanders in the field or the king's ministry in London. Ultimately, while this mid-phase of the conflict didn't turn on acts of massacre as the opening of the war had at Lexington and the southern strategy would at Waxhaws, it was still heavily influenced by multiple incidents of massacre, all of which combined to notably mobilise Patriot opposition to the Crown.

The Little War's Irregularities

The phase that had marked the Revolutionary War's opening in 1775 was defined by confusion and outraged responses on both sides. By 1777, however, the landscape of the conflict had changed. The failure of the so-called olive branch petition and the breakdown in negotiations between the Howe brothers and Congress culminated in what was to be the largest battle of the war, on Long Island, in 1776. This was followed by the ousting of Washington and the Continental Army from New York, and their twin victories at Trenton and Princeton. Underlining such military activity was the signing of the Declaration of Independence, an act that left no doubt about the intentions of Congress or the fullness of their split from Great Britain. By the time Howe began his campaign to seize Philadelphia in mid-1777 the war had entered a new phase – one of frequent small-scale violence emphasised by the numerous skirmishes and minor military operations that punctuated the larger battles.

The many irregularities perpetrated during this period were disproportionately committed by Crown Forces. While this marked an increase in bloodshed, it did not lead to immediate widespread Patriot reprisals, mainly because Patriots force in 1777 and 1778 typically struggled to conduct the sort of small-scale operations that frequently resulted in massacres. Initially unable to respond militarily, the Patriots instead channelled their efforts into highlighting and lambasting incidents of excessive force, a continuation of

earlier trends that helped offset battlefield setbacks and gave the revolutionary cause propaganda victories that ultimately translated into both political and military advantages. In short, 'the application of violence that could be portrayed as excessive consistently backfired on the British.'[7]

The small-scale British and Loyalist operations of 1777 and 1778 were usually conducted by the same units, in a cycle of heightening aggression that can be traced through the skirmishes of these two years. This excessive use of force by Crown Forces during this phase changed the dynamics of the war, driving participants to greater heights of hostility and physically affecting the outcomes of major engagements through tactical decisions influenced by past experiences and rhetoric surrounding massacres. This is corroborated by the fact that within the British Army 'by late 1779, a majority of the officer corps had rejected the conciliatory policies of the government and the high command and were able to subvert them on a local level,' pushing a more aggressive tactical agenda against enemies they viewed with disdain or even outright hatred. Though they were by now aware of the potent propaganda response that would follow extreme violence against the rebels, an increasing number of British officers had begun to flirt with the possibilities of the particular application of massacre.[8]

September 1777 saw both the Continental Army and Crown Forces operating in Pennsylvania in less than ideal conditions. Washington was struggling to defend Philadelphia following defeat at Brandywine and an abortive engagement known as the Battle of the Clouds. Howe was hampered by bad roads, poor local knowledge and a lack of transports for his supplies. Afraid of being left exposed and trapped, Washington withdrew most of his forces across the Schuylkill River, leaving behind Brigadier Antony Wayne's Continental Army division and a force of militia to hamper the British pursuit. They would soon fall victim to an attack that serves to emphasise the increasingly ruthless nature of Crown Forces in the colonies

[7] Hoock, *Scars of Independence,* 145.
[8] Armstrong Starkey, 'Paoli to Stony Point: Military ethics and weaponry during the American Revolution,' *The Journal of Military History* 58 (1994): 17 – 18.

The Attack at Paoli

Wayne, lacking Washington's prudent caution, established his headquarters near Paoli's Tavern, just four miles from Howe's camp. The British commander wasted no time in attacking, dispatching Major General Charles Grey and a picked force of light infantry supported by the 44th and 42nd Foot and the 16th Light Dragoons under the cover of darkness. Grey departed at ten in the evening and was followed by a support column consisting of the 40th and 50th Foot an hour later.

The difference between the Paoli operation and the British march to Lexington over two years previously was marked, and indicated the steep learning curve the army had experienced after the opening phase of the war. Major John André describes how all those inhabitants living along the route of the march were taken from their homes and escorted within the column, so that none of them could ride ahead and warn the Patriots. To help ensure the British did not get lost in the dark, a local blacksmith was used as a guide. Grey also ordered his men to remove the flints from their muskets, thus rendering the weapons inoperable as firearms and meaning no stray shots or accidental discharges would give the presence of his men away, as well as ensuring that their only recourse was the seventeen-inch steel bayonet carried by each soldier. This time there would be no disorganised, panicked firing by the regulars. Grey was knowingly heightening the aggression from his own men by forcing them to rely on close quarter killing to ensure their own survival, an act symptomatic of the growing number of British officers who believed that the rebellion deserved to be met with extreme violence.[9]

Wayne received two warnings of an imminent attack the day, but did not consider the evidence strong enough to act upon. His efforts to withdraw when his videttes finally confirmed the presence of approaching British columns around 11.30 p.m. were belated. The British assaulted his main encampment just before 1 a.m., passing in three waves over the South

[9] John André in *Diary of the American Revolution: From Newspapers and Original Documents, Volume 1*, ed. Frank Moore (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858), 498 - 499.

Valley hills and through the woodland bordering Wayne's position. The scattering and killing of the six groups of piquets set by Wayne further alerted the Continentals – Wayne began to organise a full retreat westward, but the picket fences hemming the surrounding fields hampered the evacuation, and the situation only worsened when a disabled cannon blocked the road. Wayne sent the 1st Pennsylvanian Regiment towards the woods to stall the attack, but in the darkness they mistook their own piquets for the enemy and fired on them. Exposed by the discharges, they were assaulted by the first wave of Crown Forces, the light infantry, who drove on into the rest of the retreating column. The second wave, consisting of the 44th Foot and the light dragoons, was then followed by the third, made up of the Highlanders of the 42nd Foot. The camp degenerated into chaos and the majority of Continental Army soldiers stampeded down the road to the White Horse tavern. The militia encamped there soon joined the panicked flight. In all 201 men were killed or wounded and 71 captured, while the British suffered less than a dozen casualties.[10]

The Patriots wasted no time emphasising the brutality of the British attack. Regular appellations for Paoli included 'the terms "massacre," "midnight slaughter," "bloody highlanders" and "British barbarity."'[11] Lieutenant Colonel Adam Hubley of the 10th Pennsylvanian regiment wrote that 'I with my own Eyes, see them, cut and hack some of our Poor men to pieces after they had fallen in their hands and scarcely shew the least mercy to any.'[12] Samuel Hay of the 7th Pennsylvanian declared that 'the annals of the age cannot produce such another scene of butchery' whilst a militiaman, William Hutchinson, reported that he had seen a Virginian who had been tortured by the British.[13] The man had:

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[10] Thomas J. McGuire, *Battle of Paoli: The Revolutionary War "Massacre" Near Philadelphia* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), 146.
[11] Thomas J. McGuire, *The Philadelphia Campaign: Brandywine and the Fall of Philadelphia* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006), 317.
[12] Adam Hubley in *The Philadelphia Campaign: Brandywine and the Fall of Philadelphia* by Thomas J. McGuire (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006), 314.
[13] Samuel Hay, 'At the Trap, Sept. 29th, 1777' in *The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America, Volume 3*, (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1859), 350.

> Shared in the consequences of the massacre… more than a dozen soldiers had fixed bayonets and formed a cordon round him, and that every one of them in sport had indulged their brutal ferocity by stabbing him in different parts of his body and limbs… upon examining him there was found, as our captain afterwards announced to the men, forty-six distinct bayonet wounds in different parts of his body.[14]

Such reports from the vanquished could perhaps be explained in part by the severity of the fighting involved. The panic of the sudden night-time assault coupled with the use of the bayonet would undoubtedly have left victims shocked and convinced they had been the subject of an atrocity. Trevelyan scoffed at the Patriot outrage, which he saw as nothing more than an angry response to having been militarily bested – 'the affair has been called, most absurdly, the Massacre of Paoli. Men always attach the idea of cruelty to modes of warfare in which they themselves are not proficient.'[15] Use of the bayonet, in this case to the exclusion of all else, was also believed to be a particularly barbaric tactic among the rebels. The weapon 'held especial fear for Americans as it embodied the superior martial professionalism of the British army; American troops were much less accustomed to bayonet fighting.'[16] The British, conversely, held the weapon in high esteem. Following the massacre of Baylor's Continental light dragoons in 1778 one British officer 'swaggered through the streets [of Philadelphia] with his bloodstained bayonet hanging from his back.'[17] The fact that the regulars were 'repeatedly ordered to view their bayonets as the weapon of choice against the rebels' made an increase in the violence of Revolutionary War engagements inevitable, especially in smaller skirmishes where incidences of close combat appear to have been more likely.[18]

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[14] William Hutchinson, 'The Philadelphia Theatre' in *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence*, ed. John C. Dann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 150.
[15] George Otto Trevelyan, *The American Revolution, Part III: Saratoga and Brandywine, Valley Forge, England and France at War* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 234.
[16] Holger Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies: Atrocity in the American Revolutionary War,' *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* 230*,* no. 1, (2016): 157 - 158.
[17] Armstrong Starkey, *Warfare in the Age of Enlightenment, 1700 – 1789* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2003), 167.
[18] Spring, *With Zeal and with Bayonets Only*, 235.

British responses to what happened at Paoli's Tavern were generally more reserved than the shock exhibited by the Patriots. André wrote only that 'the light infantry being ordered to form in front, rushed along the line putting to the bayonet all they came up with, and, overtaking the main herd of the fugitives, stabbed great numbers and pressed on their rear till it was thought prudent to order them to desist.'[19] Lieutenant Richard Mansergh St. George did term at least part of the fighting a massacre, writing that 'we… received a smart fire from another unfortunate picquet – as the first [was] instantly massacred.'[20]

There is only one near-contemporary artistic rendition of Paoli, by Italian artist Xavier della Gatta. The painting is a good example of how perceptions about the battle were coloured, for at first glance it looks like a scene of chaos and slaughter, a far cry from the stilted images of warfare usually produced in the eighteenth century. The work is also imbued with a great deal of personal detail. On the left British cavalrymen of the 16th light dragoons charge rebel infantry, while their counterparts in the Continental cavalry withdraw, firing their pistols over their shoulders. In the centre Continental infantry provide a degree of organised resistance to green-coated Loyalist attackers. There were no independent Loyalist units listed on the British order of battle, but the day before the attack Ferguson's corps of Loyalist riflemen were incorporated into a composite battalion of British light infantry companies, having previously suffered severe casualties during an ambush at Brandywine.[21] The painting also features specific individuals present at the battle, such as Captain Wolfe of the 40th Foot and Lieutenant Hunter of the 52nd. That the artist was aware of these nuances implies access to first-hand knowledge and it makes the piece a promising one when used as evidence of what happened, at least from a British perspective.

[19] John André, *Diary of the American Revolution*, 499.
[20] Richard St. George in *Battle of Paoli: The Revolutionary War "Massacre" Near Philadelphia* by Thomas J. McGuire (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), 242.
[21] McGuire, *Battle of Paoli*, 242.

The Battle of Paoli by Xavier della Gatta, 1782.[22]

[22] *The Battle of Paoli* by Xavier della Gatta, 1782. Wikipedia public domain, accessed 27/02/2017 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Paoli#/media/File:Battle_of_Paoli.jpg

The Battle of Paoli by Xavier della Gatta, 1782. Detail.[23]

It also, on the right side, unambiguously shows the clubbing and bayonetting of fleeing, defenceless or surrendering Patriots by British light infantrymen. The light troops had earned a reputation for combat effectiveness, along with the moniker the bloodhounds,' for the way in which they harried their opposition. In his study of the impact of atrocities during the Revolution prior to writing *Scars of Independence*, Holger Hoock observes that 'the hunting metaphor of canines trained to follow the scent of wounded animals escalated the othering vocabulary from the implicit comparison of the barbarian with the beastly to the animalistic metaphor.'[24] Yet it was a moniker the light infantry embraced, in a further indication that a degree of hatred was

[23] *A Dreadful scene of havock* by Xavier della Gatta, 1782. Wikipedia public domain, accessed 27/02/2017 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Paoli#/media/File:Battle_of_Paoli.jpg
[24] Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies' in *Past and Present*, 139.

rapidly developing between certain opposing corps. Matthew H. Spring points out that 'elite formations, intoxicated by a well-developed sense of martial superiority, have often been particularly liable to employ what might be interpreted as excessive force both in and out of combat,' adding that 'British light infantry gained particular notoriety for alleged brutality, especially in the northern campaigns.'[25] Nor were they afraid of this notoriety. Some sported distinctive red feathers in their hats and caps in 1777, though whether they were already doing so by the time of Paoli, or adopted it following the battle, remains disputed. Most sources held that they 'wear the red patch in commemoration of the Paoli affair,' [26] either as a mark of pride in the viciousness of their actions or 'to prevent any one not engaged in the action [at Paoli] from suffering on their account.' [27]

British officers could, with some justification, scorn the idea of Paoli as a massacre by simply defending it as the work of aggressive, motivated soldiers against an inexperienced enemy. But while some doubtless expected – and disregarded – Patriot outrage via the usual channels of newspaper, pamphlet and broadside, Crown Forces were less prepared for the direct military response that Paoli generated.

Heightened Aggression

In the weeks following Paoli, British officers noted a new-found aggressiveness in their colonial opponents. St George wrote that 'they threaten retaliation; vow that they will give no quarter to any of our battalion.'[28] The threats of vengeance were soon to be realise. On October 4 1777 the Patriots – including many survivors of Paoli – launched a surprise attack on Howe's main British encampment at Germantown, near Philadelphia. The British, having taken the rebel capital, had become strung

[25] Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only*, 234 – 235.
[26] H. A. De Weerd, 'The Affair at Paoli and the Origin of the Red Feather,' *Journal of the American Military History Foundation, Winter 1938* 2, no. 4 (1938): 235.
[27] Richard Cannon, *Historical Record of the Forty-Sixth, or South Devonshire, Regiment of Foot* (London: Parker, Furnivall and Parker, 1851), 25.
[28] Richard St. George in *Materials for History: printed from original manuscripts*, ed. Frank Moore (New York: Zenger Club, 1861), 54.

out in their cantonments. Washington formulated a somewhat overly-complicate, multi-pronged dawn assault. The first British unit to be engaged were the light infantry. Martin Hunter was there once again, and recalled hearing the attacking Patriot's desire for revenge; 'we heard a loud cry of "have at the bloodhounds; revenge Wayne's affair!"'[29]

On the opposite side Adam Hubley, who had commanded his Pennsylvanian regiment at Paoli, recalled 'it was a very remarkable circumstance that the same troops, who engag'd us on that night [at Paoli], also engag'd us in this battle, so that our behavior to them is still more justifiable, in short as in our division we neither give nor took quarters.'[30] Wayne himself wrote that 'our people remembering the action of the night of the 20… pushed on with their bayonets and took ample revenge for that night's work. The rage and fury of the soldiers was not to be restrained for some time at least not until great numbers of the enemy fell by our bayonets.'[31]

Massacres could act as a powerful military motivating factor, encouraging more aggressive behaviour on the battlefield and creating a cycle of antagonism and revenge killings. Such a mind-set, however, was not always conducive to victory, as Germantown proved. When the Patriots first appeared out of the morning mist, Howe thought he was facing a foraging party. The reality of the situation soon hit home, along with three columns of Continental infantry and one of militia. As the British scrambled to organise a defence Colonel Musgrave and his 40th Foot found themselves cut off inside the home of the Chew family, Cliveden House, a prominent stone building that lay along the route of the primary rebel thrust. Despite being hugely outnumbered, Musgrave and his men refused every offer of surrender.

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[29] Martin Hunter, 'Massacre at Paoli' in *The Historical Magazine: And Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America, Volume 4*, eds. John Ward Dean, George Folsom, John Gilmary Shea, Henry Reed Stiles, Henry Barton Dawson (New York: Charles Richardson and Co, 1860), 347.
[30] Adam Hubley in *Battle of Paoli: The Revolutionary War "Massacre" Near Philadelphia* by Thomas J. McGuire (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), 174.
[31] Anthony Wayne, 'Camp Near Pauling Mill' in *Major-General Anthony Wayne and the Pennsylvania Line of the Continental Army*, ed. Charles J. Stille, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1893), 96.

Washington's attacking vigour ran out, and rather than leave behind a holding force while pressing deeper into the British camp, he agreed with his artillery commander, Henry Knox, and focussed his force's efforts on the house. Despite deploying an entire brigade and Knox's artillery, the Patriots were unable to dislodge the 40th, a factor that contributed a great deal to the failure of the day's attack. McGuire hypothesises that 'the "no quarter" behaviour of the Pennsylvanians in the opening attack gave Musgrave's troops the resolve to stand firm against overwhelming odds.'[32]

The fraught atmosphere following Paoli changed the dynamics of Germantown. Besides the unambiguous desire for revenge among Wayne and his Pennsylvanians, multiple British sources from among those who had fought at Paoli reported unrest over the fact that they knew the Patriots had marked them out for retaliation. Lieutenant St. George, writing less than forty-eight hours before the attack at Germantown, discussed how 'our present one [situation] is unpleasant; our left too open and unguarded. We expect reinforcements. There has been firing this night all around the sentries, which seems as if they endeavour to feel our situation. I am fatigued and must sleep… I wake once or twice, or more; my ear is susceptible to the least noise.'[33] Lieutenant Hunter made a near-identical observation; 'The Americans ever after Wayne's Affair called us "The Bloodhounds." I don't think our battalion slept very soundly after that night for a long time.'[34] He further confirms an attitude of fearful readiness at Germantown; 'General Wayne commanded the advance, and fully expected to be revenged for the surprise we had given him. When the first shots were fired at our pickets, so much had we all Wayne's affair in remembrance, that the battalion was out and under arms in a minute.'[35]

Despite the light infantry's apprehension, like the 40th Foot they appear to have resolved to fight all the harder rather than flee from potential retribution.

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[32] McGuire, *Battle of Paoli*, 173.
[33] Richard St. George in *Materials for History*, 54.
[34] Martin Hunter in *The Philadelphia Campaign: Brandywine and the Fall of Philadelphia* by Thomas J. McGuire (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006), 317.
[35] Martin Hunter, 'Massacre at Paoli' in *The Historical Magazine*, 347.

Though numbering just three hundred men they twice charged the Patriot column approaching from the mist, and only withdrew after suffering substantial casualties and finding themselves outflanked on both sides. Hunter related how 'this was the first time we had retreated from the Americans, and it was with great difficulty we could get our men to obey our orders.'[36] They were entirely aware of their status as both bloodthirsty and effective soldiers, and seem to have born a particular hatred of the rebels, a hatred that 'did not bode well for the latter if they found themselves within reach of British bayonets in combat.'[37] The purported response of one Patriot officer during the later Baylor incident is instructive; 'one of the rebel officers, demanding the name of the corps which had attacked them, was answered "The British light infantry," on which he exclaimed, "Then we shall all be cut off."'[38] The savage reputation the light infantry garnered appears to have preceded them.

Both sides fought harder at Germantown because of the massacre at Paoli, to such an extent that it affected the overall outcome of the battle. The Patriots found exhortations to vengeance to be an effective motivational tool, covering over the stigma of defeat and inspiring more aggressive tactics, while the Crown Forces fought on believing that they were not going to be shown quarter. Given the dynamic now developing between both sides thanks to past claims of massacre, it is unsurprising that greater bloodshed was to come.

British Brutality

If the memory of Paoli lived on, it was not the only such engagement to occur in either 1777 or 1778 – both years marked a heightening of military violence, and it was Crown Forces that escalated the aggression the fastest. On May 1 1778, the British again caught the Patriots sleeping, this time at Crooked

[36] Ibid.
[37] Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only*, 136.
[38] 'New York Gazette, September 28' in *The Diary of the Revolution: A Centennial Volume Embracing the Current Events in Our Country's History from 1775 to 1781*, ed. Frank Moore (Hartford, CN: J. B. Burr Publishing Company, 1876), 622.

Billet Tavern, Pennsylvania. The attackers numbered around eight hundred men, a mixed force of regulars and Provincial Loyalists. Due to an unwise lapse in patrols and the flight of their piquets, the Patriots were again caught badly off guard. The situation went from bad to worse when the retreating revolutionaries were snared in a pincer movement, during which the militia's commander, General John Lacey, reported that atrocities were committed:

> Some of the unfortunate, who fell into the merciless hands of the British, were most cruelly and inhumanely butchered. Some were set on fire with buckwheat straw; and others had their clothes burned on their backs. Some of the surviving sufferers say they saw the enemy set fire to the wounded while yet alive; who struggled to put it out but were too weak and expired under the torture. Others I saw, who, after being wounded with a ball, had received near a dozen wounds with cutlasses and bayonets. I can find as many witnesses to the proof of the cruelties as there were people on the spot; and that was no small number who came as spectators.[39]

Interestingly, there are two slightly different versions of Lacey's account. In place of the above, the other is a somewhat more succinct declaration that several militiamen 'were inhumanly Butchard after they had Surrendered. The Close [clothes] of Some were Set on fire after wounded and Burnt to death.'[40] Whether the longer version was a later embellishment (it only appears in an 1829 collection of primary sources) is not actually of great importance given that ultimately the same grim events are described in both. Washington took Lacey's account seriously enough to order an inquiry into 'the most authentic testimony of the conduct of the British Troops toward the Militia under the comd of Brigr Genl Lacey,' with the intention of forwarding any evidence of irregular conduct to General Howe.[41] This ultimately resulted in four eyewitness accounts, recorded by Andrew Long, a Bucks County Justice of the Peace, in mid May 1778. The first testimony, delivered jointly

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[39] John Lacy, 'Gen. Lacy to Gen. Armstrong' in *The Register of Pennsylvania, Volume 3*, ed. Samuel Hazard (Philadelphia: G. T. Geddes, 1829), 143.
[40] John Lacy, 'To George Washington from Brigadier General John Lacey, Jr., 2 May 1778' in *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, Volume 15, May - June 1778*, ed. Edward G. Lengel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 20.
[41] George Washington, 'To Brigadier General William Maxwell,' in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745 – 1799, Volume 11,* ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), 358.

by two men, Samuel Henry and William Watts, mirrors Lacey's account of the British setting fire to their enemies:

> We found the bodies of the dead used in a most inhuman & barbarous manner, the field in which some of the men fell was Buck Wheat Straw, which appeared to us they had taken & set fire to, and threw the men into, whether quite dead or not we cannot tell, but when found burnt to that degree that some of them could not be known. We viewed the Corps of most of the dead, & saw only two, as we remember, that had escaped the most cruel Barbarity that had ever been exercised by any civilised Nation; nay, Savage barbarity in its utmost exertion of cruelty could but equal it.[42]

The second account, by a man named William Stayner, stated British troops had been boasting about the murder of Patriot prisoners upon their return to occupied Philadelphia:

> That several of the British Light Infantry informed him… that in the Engagement with Genl Lacey on the first of May inst., they Bayoneted some of Genl Laceys men, after they had surrendered Themselves Prisoners, others they threw into heaps of Buckwheat Straw, while alive, and burnt them to death.[43]

Another local, Thomas Craven, on whose land much of the fighting appears to have taken place, reported how he had conversed with a British dragoon in the immediate aftermath of the skirmish:

> He was asked by a Trooper if he did not see some fires round the field, to which he said he did; the Trooper said they were men, & that their own Amunition set them on fire; after the British left the Ground he went again into the field, where he saw four or five men burnt to a shocking degree.[44]

This account contrasts interestingly with the others, offering as it does an alternative cause for the burned bodies - volatile gunpowder, rather than British brutality. Needless to say, the fact that the explanation for the burnings comes from a British soldier renders it suspect.

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[42] Samuel Hazard, *Pennsylvania Archives, Volume 6* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Co., 1853), 501.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid, 502.

None of the primary British and Loyalist accounts of Crooked Billet bother to mention any irregularities. One states that smaller parties of fleeing revolutionaries 'were killed,' but offers no damning elaboration. [45] The diary entries of various British officers make no mention of them having heard of any atrocities, interesting given the eagerness of some anti-war officers like Charles Stuart of the Brigade of Guards to make mention of any excessive violence used against the rebels.[46] A Hessian officer, who was not an eyewitness, did mention that 'several grenadiers were so embittered that they burned nine rebels.'[47] Aside from this however the only other account is the last of Andrew Long's deponents, Samuel Erwin who, upon investigating the battlefield after both sides had departed:

> Was much surprised to find one of the Militia men lying dead, his Clothes burning & near consumed, which had burnt the Body black; he thinks the man was set on fire before he was dead, from this circumstance his arms were standing nearly erect; he further sayeth, he saw three other Bodies in Thos. Cravens Field burnt in an inhuman manner.[48]

Torture and massacres in minor skirmishes such as the one at Crooked Billet became almost the norm throughout 1777 and 1778. At Drake's farm near New Brunswick, during the so-called New Jersey forage war, a British ambush led by Brigadier Sir William Erskine caught the 5th Virginian Regiment unawares. While the Virginians counterattacked, six of their wounded were cut off. One Connecticut regular told of how the British happened upon one of the injured Americans, Lieutenant Kelley; 'they took his own Rifle & with the butt of it broke & Pounded his Skull to pieces… a Soldier that belong'd to my mess Andrew Cushman, a pleasant youth was

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[45] John Graves Simcoe, *Simcoe's Military Journal: A History of the Operations of a Partisan Corps, Called the Queen's Rangers, Commanded by Lieut. Col. J. G. Simcoe, during the War of the American Revolution* (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1844), 59.
[46] The officers in question who comment briefly on Crooked Billet are Howe's ADC, Friedrich von Muenchhausen, John Peebles of the Black Watch, Francis Downman of the Royal Artillery and two Royal Engineers, Archibald Robertson and John Montresor.
[47] Carl Leopold Baurmeister, 'Philadelphia, May 10 1778' in *Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals, 1776 - 1784, of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces*, ed. Bernhard A. Uhlendorf (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 169.
[48] Hazard, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 502.

left among the wounded & with the rest was all murdered by repeated Stabs with the bayonet.'[49] The account was corroborated by a Continental Army Sergeant, Thomas McCarty, who stated the men had been stabbed so many times they'd been made to look like sieves.[50] *The Virginia Gazette* picked up on the killings, reporting that 'they [the British] treated some of our wounded, who had the misfortune to fall into their hands, with the most savage barbarity.'[51]

Clearly stung by such reports the Patriot commander during the engagement, Brigadier General Adam Stephen, wrote a furious letter of complaint to Sir William Erskine. He declared that six Virginians 'were murdered, and their bodies mangled, and their brains beat out, by the troops of his Britannic Majesty.'[52] He then went on to draw parallels with the Seven Years War, describing how even after the defeat of Braddock's column in 1755 the Native Americans 'could not be prevailed upon to butcher the wounded in the manner your troops have done.'[53] He closed the letter with threats of retaliation, saying he was going 'to employ a body of ferocious savages' to retaliate reminding Sir William of how in 1764 'Lieutenant Gordon... and eight more of the British soldiers, were roasted alive, and eaten up by the fierce savages' and stating unequivocally that 'British officers stand answerable to the world, and to posterity.'[54]

Sir William's reply to such a ferocious confrontation was unsympathetic. He stated that he 'never countenanced an act of barbarity' and nor could he

[49] Elisha Bostwick, 'A Connecticut Soldier Under Washington: Elisha Bostwick's Memoirs of the First Years of the Revolution' in *The William and Mary Quarterly, Volume 6, Number 1,* ed. William S. Powell (Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1949), 105.
[50] Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only*, 233.
[51] Robert Forsyth, 'From the Virginia Gazette' in *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events for the Year 1777, Volume 5*, ed. Thomas Pownall (London: Jay Almon, 1778), 213.
[52] Adam Stephen, 'Copy of a letter sent to Sir William Erskine, complaining of the cruelty of British troops' in *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events for the Year 1777*, *Volume 5,* ed. Thomas Pownall (London: Jay Almon, 1778), 213.
[53] Ibid, 213 - 214.
[54] Ibid, 214.

'think any gentleman in the British service equal to it.'[55] He then saw fit to turn the tables by lambasting the revolutionaries for their own lack of restraint, stating that 'it is not to be wondered at if our soldiers are a little exasperated, considering the many cruelties that have been of late committed on them and their officers, *even unarmed*.'[56] This is likely a reference to a report delivered less than two months earlier by a member of the 17th Light Dragoons, Thomas Wileman, who had provided a sworn deposition that while he had been a prisoner of the Patriots at Lancaster he had heard of a house being set on fire; 'a suspicion arising that it had been done by the British prisoners there, the rebel soldiers with bayonets killed eight and wounded 18 of them.'[57] Howe wrote a letter of complaint over the incident to Washington. References were also made to the Patriot predilection for targeting officers, which was sometimes viewed as the equivalent to Patriot distaste when it came to actions featuring the bayonet. Indeed the rebel methods of fighting were frequently censured by British officers, who claimed that 'firing from hidden emplacements, making feigned requests for quarter, picking off sentries, pickets, messengers, even officers… these were all tactics more worthy of frontier savages.'[58] Both sides saw in their enemies a foe that was willing to stoop to what it considered barbarous levels, and this only led to further violence.

British-perpetrated massacres continued throughout 1778. Ferocious surprise bayonet assaults became 'a recurring nightmare for the Americans' – on March 21 1778 a force spearheaded by the Queen's Rangers, commanded by John Graves Simcoe, caught Patriot militia sleeping at the house of a Loyalist judge named William Hancock.[59] Later histories stated that, after surrounding the house in the dark, the Loyalists stormed in with the

[55] William Erskine, 'The ANSWER' in *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events for the Year 1777, Volume 5*, ed. Thomas Pownall (London: Jay Almon, 1778), 214.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Thomas Wileman, 'February 18, 1778' in *Dragoon Diary: The History of the Third Continental Light Dragoons*, ed. C. F. William Maurer (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2005), 63 – 64.
[58] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 252.
[59] Starkey, 'Paoli to Stony Point,' *The Journal of Military History,* 7.

bayonet. The militia, despite 'none offering resistance, were bayoneted in cold blood' and 'all within perished.' [60] [61] That the Loyalists disregarded who they were killing is beyond dispute, given that Hancock himself was accidentally killed despite his pacifistic Quaker and Loyalist sentiments. Simcoe wrote that there were twenty or thirty militiamen within the house 'all of whom were killed' and called the accidental death of Hancock one of 'the real miseries of war.'[62]

Simcoe's account is at least partially incorrect – a British engineer, Archibald Robertson, recorded 16 killed and 11 prisoners from the attack.[63] Likewise, a Patriot militia lieutenant who was present during the attack, Reuel Sayre, recorded his and others' survival, writing that 'all were killed, left for dead or taken prisoners but myself… I had one brother killed and one taken prisoner in this night affair.'[64] While it is clear prisoners were taken, it also certain that the attacking Loyalists exhibited a killing frenzy. A later history of the Queen's Rangers attempted to ameliorate their aggression by complaining that the attack on Hancock's house:

> Was a lamentable occurrence and has enabled American writers to assert that these men were massacred, but it must be remembered that it was a night attack and that Simcoe's Rangers, instead of this insignificant detachment, expected to meet a force of at least 700 or 800 men, and, of course, a desperate resistance was expected.[65]

That a more violent policy was now being pursued by British officers is emphasised by the response to the Hancock massacre. A day later the

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[60] W. H. Carpenter and T. S. Arthur, *The History of New Jersey from its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1874), 198.
[61] Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution, Volume 1* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1850), 139.
[62] John Graves Simcoe, 'A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers from the End of the Year 1777 to the Conclusion of the Late American War' in *Simcoe's Military Journal* (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1844), 52.
[63] Donald J. Gara, *The Queen's American Rangers* (Yardley: Westholme Publishing, 2015), 141.
[64] Reuel Sayre in *The History of Salem County, New Jersey: Being the Story of John Fenwick's Colony, the Oldest English Speaking Settlement on the Delaware River*, ed. Joseph Sheppard Sickler (Salem, NJ: Sunbeam Publishing, 1937), 161.
[65] James Hannay, 'History of the Queen's Rangers' in *From the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, Third Series – 1908 – 1909, Volume 2, Section 2* (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 1909), 141.

commander of the local Crown Forces, Colonel Charles Mawhood (of Germantown fame), issued a declaration stating that if the militia did not disband he would 'attack all such of the Militia as remain in Arms, burn and destroy their houses and other property, and reduce them, their unfortunate Wives and Children, to Beggary and Distress.'[66] Such a threat of unrestrained warfare only further incensed the Patriots. The commander of the local militia, Colonel Elijah Hand, compared Mawhood to 'a barbarous Atilla.'[67] The Patriot governor of New Jersey, William Livingston, also received a petition for reinforcements from the militia, who highlighted how the enemy:

> By the express Orders of Coll Mawhood the commanding Officer, bayonetted & butchered in the most inhuman manner a Number of the Militia, who have unfortunately fallen into their hands. That Coll Mawhood immediately after the Massacre, in open Letters sent to both Officers and Privates by a Flag had the Effrontery to insult us with a demand, that we should lay down our Arms.'[68]

The petition was forwarded to Washington.

The Attack at Tappan

Worse was to come. On September 27 1778, almost exactly a year after Paoli, 'No Flints' Grey repeated his success against the 3rd Regiment of Continental light dragoons, encamped in farms and barns in the vicinity of Tappan, New Jersey. [69] Grey had been ordered by the new British commander in chief, Sir Henry Clinton, to provide a diversion for an assault on Patriot privateers operating out of Little Egg Harbour in southern New Jersey. Learning of the presence of several hundred militiamen encamped

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[66] Charles Mawhood in *Principles and Acts of the Revolution in America*, ed. Hezekiah Niles (Baltimore: William Ogden Niles, 1822), 463.
[67] Elijah Hand in *Principles and Acts of the Revolution in America*, ed. Hezekiah Niles (Baltimore: William Ogden Niles, 1822), 463.
[68] "To George Washington from William Livingston, 9 April 1778," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed April 11, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-14-02-0416. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 14, *1 March 1778–30 April 1778*, ed. David R. Hoth. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004, 437–440.]
[69] Starkey, *Warfare in the Age of Enlightenment*, 166.

near the Hackensack river and the Continental dragoons nearby at Tappan, Grey once more took his bloodhounds – the composite light infantry battalion – and some dragoons, along with the 33rd and 64th Foot and the grenadier battalion. Departing at 11 p.m., they came upon the Continentals between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m., and caught them completely by surprise. Grey divided his light infantry into two wings of six companies. One wing successful captured the Continental piquets, leaving the other to infiltrate the village undetected.

Again relying on their bayonets, the light infantry forced the home being used by the commander of the Continental cavalry, Lieutenant Colonel Baylor and his three ranking subordinates. One officer was killed and two were mortally wounded, while Baylor was taken prisoner as he attempted to flee up the chimney of a large Dutch oven, suffering a bayonet wound that would eventually kill him a few years later. The British carried on into the surrounding barns and farms. Some Patriots, alerted by the commotion, resisted. Others fled. With daybreak, and the billets stormed, the light infantry carried on and routed the nearby militia. In all 15 of the 116-strong Continental Army detachment were killed, and 54 wounded or taken prisoner.

As had happened at Paoli, the bloodshed at Tappan prompted a flurry of letters and a formal investigation by Patriot leaders. Described as ‘an unprecedented massacre’ even when compared with previous incidents, the Continental Congress requested that William Livingston ascertain exactly what happened on the night of 27 September. [70] Livingston tasked the Continental Army’s Major General Stirling with heading up the investigation, as he had done with his inquiry into Wayne’s conduct after Paoli. Stirling in turn asked a doctor and chaplain in one of his brigades who had arrived at Tappan soon after the skirmish ‘to collect every circumstance relative to the massacre of Colonel Baylor’s Corps and to get them ascertained on Oath’[71]

[70] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 261.
[71] William Alexander Stirling, *The Papers of George Washington*, *Revolutionary War Series, Volume 17, 15 September – 31 October 1778*, ed. Philander D. Chase (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 416.

as well as, more generally, to ‘collect all the evidence in his power of that barbarous affair.’[72]

That evidence appeared quite clear. Baylor himself, writing to Washington, described the engagement as ‘the horrid massacre.’[73] Stirling likewise used the charged word to refer to the incident in his report.[74] Even more damning were the testimonies formally recorded by Griffith. Southward Cullency, of the 3rd Regiment’s 1st Troop, who was listed as having suffered twelve wounds, told of how ‘he and all his men asked for quarter, which was refused; that the British Capt. Ball… asked his men, how many of the rebels were actually dead; and, on being told the number, he ordered all the rest to be knocked on the head.’ Thomas Benson, 2nd Troop, who was listed as also having twelve wounds, declared ‘he heard men in the barn, where he was, ask for quarter, which was returned with wounds and abusive language; that he did not ask for quarter himself, believing it in vain, as he heard the British soldiers reply to others, who begged it, that their captain had ordered them to stab all, and take no prisoners.’ Julian King and George Willis, both of 2nd Troop, having suffered sixteen and nine wounds respectively, stated that ‘British soldiers, on entering the barn where they were, sent to know of their officer what they were to do with the two prisoners, who return for answer, that they were to kill every one of them; that they begged for quarter, which was refused.’ Barlett Hawkins, 5th Troop, who bore three wounds, stated he heard that ‘he heard the British soldiers say, they could give no quarters, as it was contrary to their orders.’ On and on the depositions went, seventeen in all, each one describing how they and their fellow dragoons were either denied quarter, or initially granted it only to be bayonetted anyway.[75]

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[72] William Alexander Stirling, ‘Extract of a Letter from Major-general Lord Stirling’ in *The Remembrancer, Or Impartial Repository of Public Events, Volume 7*, ed. John Almon (London: J. Almon, 1779), 292.
[73] George Baylor, *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, Volume 17, 15 September – 31 October 1778*, ed. Philander D. Chase (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 458.
[74] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 262.
[75] ‘Lord Stirling’ in *The Remembrancer, Or Impartial Repository of Public Events, Volume 7*, ed. John Almon (London: J. Almon, 1779), 294 - 295.

Such an investigation, forensic by eighteenth century standards and nominally backed by medical and judicial processes, represented the Patriot's most effective way of dealing with small scale military defeats. Holger Hoock sees in such efforts a concerted attempt to damage Britain's reputation both in the colonies and abroad, writing that the Patriot's objectives were:

> To ground allegations of atrocity in empirical evidence: collected by official fiat; documented by expert witnesses such as medical personnel and other figures who claimed authority and authenticity; involving in the process Congressional committees, army commanders in the field and civilian officials on site; acquiring at least the semblance of legal procedure; and collated, published and distributed with Congressional imprimatur.[76]

Such tactics had been utilised with success since the Boston massacre and the engagement at Lexington, with the accounts of militiamen, examined by doctors and sworn in by judges, establishing the anti-British narrative that so coloured the war's opening. As happened following the Baylor incident, accounts were also often accompanied by a record of how many wounds the victim had suffered; 'the precise counting of what appeared to be an extremely high number of wounds was to become a topos in the atrocity narrative: an excess of wounds indicated assailants bent on finishing off the wounded after they had been rendered incapable of resistance.'[77]

Some expressed disbelief at the amount of wounds described. One British paper stated that;

> It will undoubtedly excite the admiration of whosoever considered the nature of the weapon, and the force which it derives, as well from the weight of the musket to which it is fixed, as from the manner in which it is used, and the strength of the operator, that these men were not only able to give their testimony at a considerable distance of time, but that no doubt seem then to have been entertained of their recovery.[78]

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[76] Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies' in *Past and Present*, 132.
[77] Ibid, 129.
[78] 'Retrospective view of Affairs in 1778' in *The Scots Magazine, Volume 43*, ed. James Boswell (Edinburgh: A. Murray and J. Cochran, 1781), 34.

Regardless of the veracity of their claims, the Patriots continued to use the due process they had developed after Boston and the first phase of the war, carefully documenting their enemy's barbarism. This was twinned with repeated public condemnation of British atrocities, effectively negated the impact of the numerous minor British military successes during the mid-phase of the conflict and helping to maintain the revolutionary cause through this difficult point of the war.

Doctor Griffith's final report on the Baylor incident fitted the Patriot narrative perfectly. He found the fact that Grey 'ordered no quarter to be given appears, as well as by the inclosed testimony, from the report of many inhabitants who have heard the British officers speak of it… the charges were drawn from their firelocks & the flints taken out that the men might be constrained to use their bayonets only.' He went on to state that 'very few, or none, of the British officers entered the quarters of our troops on this occasion, that no stop might be put to the rage and barbarity of their bloodhounds.' He concluded that 'Congress was not misinformed respecting the savage cruelty attending the surprise of Colonel Baylor's Regiment.'[79]

British reports made no coordinated effort to answer the rebel outrage with their own empirical fact-finding, and indeed as we have seen, some accounts shared the horror of the victims. Robert Shaw of the 33rd Foot recalled how 'our savage fellow soldiers were butchering… some were seen having their arms cut off, and others with their bowels hanging out crying for mercy.'[80] Conversely Lieutenant Martin Hunter said only that during the engagement 'not a shot was fired, and the whole regiment of dragoons, except a few who were bayoneted, were taken prisoner.'[81] The Loyalist New York periodical, *Rivington's Gazette*, reported that there was resistance from the dragoons; 'sixteen privates were lodged, who, discharging ten or twelve pistols, and

[79] David Griffith, 'From Orange Town' in *Dragoon Diary: The History of the Third Continental Light Dragoons*, ed. C. F. William Maurer (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2005), 169 - 170.
[80] Shaw, *A Narrative of the Life and Travels of John Robert Shaw*, 20 – 21.
[81] Martin Hunter in *Historical Record of the Fifty-Second Regiment (Oxfordshire Light Infantry): From the Year 1755 to the Year 1858*, ed. W. S. Moorsom (London: Richard Bentley, 1860), 24.

striking at the troops *sans effet* with their broadswords, nine of them were instantly bayoneted, and seven received quarter.'[82] André's journal entry for the engagement was even more brief, stating only that of the Continentals 'the whole corps within six or eight men were killed or taken prisoners.'[83] Another British officer not present at the engagement expressed the belief that the light infantry were at least partly guilty of excessive violence; 'the 2d. battalion light infantry were thought to be active and bloody on this service, and it's acknowledged on all hands they might have spared some who made no resistance.'[84] In a statement that shows how casualties multiply with rumour, a Hessian officer not present during the attack claimed that 'our troops attacked with bayonets and slaughtered all of them, so that only three were able to save themselves by flight.'[85] Lieutenant Colonel Charles Stuart was again damning of his countrymen's actions; 'the credit that might have been due to the Corps that effected the surprise is entirely buried in the barbarity if their behaviour.'[86]

British Aggression Unanswered

While certainly aware of the dangers of excessive force when it came to public perception both in the colonies and in Britain, the British Army itself did very little to curb acts of extreme violence as the war progressed. Regular soldiers and low-to-mid ranking officers exhibited a particular hatred for American colonists, sometimes regardless of allegiances. British officers deliberately appealed to their men's self-belief as elite soldiers and goaded them into action at opportune moments, but this could also lead to unrestrained and excessive violence. At Germantown Howe used his men's belief in their own superior status to great effect; 'seeing the [Light] battalion

[82] 'New York Gazette, September 28' in *The Diary of the Revolution*, 622.
[83] John André, *André's Journal: An Authentic Record of the Movements and Engagements of the British Army in America* (Boston: Bibliophile Society, 1903), 259.
[84] Stephen Kemble, 'The Kemble Papers, volume 1' in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society, Volume 16* (New York, 1883), 163.
[85] Philipp Waldeck, 'October 1, 1778' in *Dragoon Diary: The History of the Third Continental Light Dragoons*, ed. C. F. William Maurer (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2005), 150.
[86] Charles Stuart in *A Prime Minister and His Son: from the Correspondence of the 3rd Earl of Bute and of Lt.-General the Hon. Sir Charles Stuart, K.B.*, ed. Violet Stuart Wortley (London: J. Murray, 1925), 137

retreating, all broken, he got into a passion and exclaimed – "for shame, light infantry! I never saw you retreat before; form! Form!"' [87] The light infantry twice charged a superior attacking force even though 'as it was near the end of the campaign, it [the battalion] was very weak' and its officers struggled to get their men to withdraw despite almost being overrun. [88] In fact Lieutenant Hunter, narrating the light infantry's actions, actually relished seeing his commanding officer almost scythed down by Patriot grapeshot after he had accused the bloodhounds of flight, stating 'I think I never saw people enjoy a discharge of grape before; but we really felt pleased to see the enemy make such an appearance, and to hear the grape rattle about the commander-in-chief's ears, after he had accused the battalion of having run away.'[89]

It is not surprising that such a brash attitude should lead to a disregard for Patriot lives in combat situations, exemplified by the killings carried out during actions like the Baylor massacre. Crucially, not only did the light infantry quench their need for violence by bayonetting sleeping men, but they also seem to have been encouraged to do so by a number of their lieutenants and captains, sometimes even against their own better judgement. Nor were such actions the preserve of none but the army's elite. As we shall see, the men of the 54th and 40th Foot, stung by a bloody engagement, did not restrain themselves after storming Fort Griswold in 1781, and appear to have been actively encouraged to kill trapped and surrendering Patriots by their officers.

The British Army's structure enabled an environment where battlefield brutality could go largely unchecked. While adherence to orders and the army's system of command remained paramount in and out of combat, sanguinary acts on the battlefield by the midpoint of the war were less likely to be censured than overlooked or even encourage. The British military's

[87] Martin Hunter, 'Massacre at Paoli' in *The Historical Magazine: And Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America, Volume 4*, eds. John Ward Dean, George Folsom, John Gilmary Shea, Henry Reed Stiles, Henry Barton Dawson (New York: Charles Richardson and Co, 1860), 347.
[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

esprit de corps was focussed on the regimental family, with soldiers expected to uphold and honour their regiment not only by retaining their discipline, but through acts of particular bravery – or viciousness – on the battlefield. Paternalistic and familial bonds are in evidence throughout. Officers displayed 'fatherly pride in, and concern for the welfare of' their enlisted men, while the grenadier battalions were known to refer to the light infantry as their 'children', with the light infantry addressing the grenadiers as their 'fathers.'[90] So strong was the bond, especially between the flank companies, that one officer was moved to tears describing the martial brotherhood in evidence between them when they mustered together in New Jersey following the battle of Trenton.[91]

Such an attitude helped to forge a capable fighting force, but also accentuated the disregard regulars felt for rebel Americans and promoted acts of excessive violence that were left unpunished by officers who believed such bloodshed exemplified their men's ardour for king and country. By 1780, a number of those officers held high rank in North America and were operationally decisive when it came to the success or failure of Britain's southern strategy. Men such as Patrick Ferguson, Banastre Tarleton, Francis Rawdon and James Wemyss achieved localised successes in the Carolinas without understanding – or actively disregarding – the damage being done by the violence they inflicted. They helped to create a cauldron of conflict and strife in the south that was the exact opposite of the return to law and order that British strategists had hoped for.

The complex operational and strategic problems posed to the British in the south in 1780 and 1781 were beyond the abilities of most British commanders on the ground to solve, and the massacres that resulted from their attempts to subdue the country further eroded Crown authority and the morale of the ever-shrinking number of Loyalists in the southern colonies. The seeds were such failure were sown in the northern colonies, however,

[90] Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only*, 110.
[91] Ibid, 115 – 116.

when during the mid-phase of the war British soldiers and officers found they could indulge in acts of extreme violence with little threat of censure from their own side. The public perception of British soldiers in North America suffered relentlessly during this period, and Patriot propaganda did not have to look far or fabricate a wholly unreasonable narrative to paint Crown Forces as the violent foot soldiers of a bloodthirsty tyrant. Simply put, 'their army's perceived or actual cruelty was their enemy's best recruiting agent.'[92]

Patriot Vengeance

Word of the massacre at Tappan spread rapidly among the Patriots, and had a powerful impact on their views of the enemy. Continental Army Colonel Charles Pettit wrote that 'I am told it was a kind of massacre as little or no resistance could be made.'[93] Another Continental officer, Henry Laurens, wondered at the fact that;

> The unfortunate gentleman [Baylor] was off his guard, but does this error warrant the butchery which we are told the cruel English exercised upon himself and his party? If this shall be proved ought we to suffer their guilt to pass with impunity? When & in what manner should retaliation be made?[94]

That the thoughts of Laurens should turn to vengeance, as many Patriots had after Paoli, is further evidence of the spiral of excessive violence that the war was falling into by 1778. Eighteen days after the Baylor incident, the operation which Grey's attack had been designed to support went ahead, with British officer Patrick Ferguson leading a strike against Patriot privateers in New Jersey. The attack at Little Egg Habor saw the combined force of British regulars and Loyalist Provincials mount a successful surprise attack on an outpost manned by Patriots belonging to Pulaski's Legion. The Legion had been betrayed by a deserter, Gustav Juliat, who informed them of the location of both the outpost and the main body of Pulaski's men. Taking

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[92] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 266.
[93] Charles Pettit, *Greene Papers*, 2:531–36 W.
[94] Henry Laurens, *The Papers of Henry Laurens, Volume 14, July 7, 1778 – Dec. 9, 1778,* eds. David R. Chestnutt and C. James Taylor (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 401.

advantage of the lax security around Ridgeway Farm (the house being used by the Legion's fifty-strong detachment), Crown Forces surprised and stormed the building at around 4 a.m. Ferguson himself observed that 'it being a night attack Little Quarter could be given, so there were only five prisoners.'[95] This is corroborated by the fact that around fifty Patriots were killed or wounded, most with the bayonet.

The Patriots had again been surprised and killed en-mass, again at night, and again by enemies relying on the bayonet. The *Scots Magazine* added a further bloodthirsty undertone to the attack, observing that 'an account given by the deserters, that Pulaski [the Patriot commander] had issued public orders, forbidding his corps to grant any quarter to the British troops, afforded a new edge to the fury of the soldiers, and shut up their bosoms against every feeling of pity or remorse.'[96] It claimed that 'in consequence of which our people took only five prisoners, all the rest, with their lieutenant-colonel, were left on the spot, the business being done with the bayonet only.'[97] Regarding the subsequent Patriot anger at both Little Egg Harbor and the Baylor incident, the magazine added:

> This and the other expedition [against Baylor] afforded an opportunity for a renewal of those complaints which the Americans had so loudly and repeatedly made, of the inhumanities and cruelties exercised by some corps of the British troops, as well as their auxiliaries. A number of real or supposed facts were now particularly supplied by the surprise of Baylor's regiment, which was represented as a cold-blooded massacre of naked men.[98]

Regardless of such dismissive British commentary, the Patriots would finally get their opportunity for revenge on July 16 1779. General Anthony Wayne would again be at the forefront, this time leading the best infantry the Continental Army had to offer in an operation that was clearly modelled on the British successes of the previous two years. Wayne and his newly-formed

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[95] 'Retrospective view of Affairs in 1778' in *The Scots Magazine*, 34.
[96] Ibid.
[97] 'An Account of Major Patrick Ferguson' in *The Scots Magazine, Volume 43*, ed. James Boswell (Edinburgh: A. Murray and J. Cochran, 1781), 29.
[98] 'Retrospective view of Affairs in 1778' in *The Scots Magazine*, 34.

light infantry assaulted a British fortress at Stony Point, relying on a swift, surprise night-time attack that emphasised the use of the bayonet. During the fighting one British officer, Captain Campbell of the 71st Highlanders, was turned away by soldiers of the 17th Foot who informed him that the part of the fort he was headed to had been overrun, and that the Patriots there were not taking prisoners.[99] Similarly a Patriot officer, Lieutenant Colonel William Hull, reported that his men 'made free use of the bayonet… we were compelled to continue the dreadful slaughter, owing to the fierce and obstinate resistance of the enemy.'[100] Another source noted the use of past massacres to motivate the attackers – 'General Wayne tickled their ears with "Remember the Paola [Paoli] and the massacre of Lady Washington's light horse at the Tapaan"… the grenadiers, in particular, of the 71st regiment made for a while a gallant defence.'[101] One Patriot soldier, recalling the action, wrote that at Stony Point 'the brave General Wayne retaliated upon the British for the massacre of his men.'[102] Yet another of Wayne's men stated that 'after General Wayne got possession of the Fort that it was with difficulty that General Wayne could prevent the soldiers from massacring the prisoners.'[103] Furthermore, in a pension application statement overlooked by most later retellings of the engagement, one Patriot soldier wrote that 'at this place Colonel Fleury undertook to cut the flag staff down with his sword. This deponent himself cut down the flag & gave it to Colonel Fleury – on the same staff they hung some tories.'[104] In all the British claimed 20 dead, while other sources stated a figure as high as 63 killed and around 70 wounded. Total casualties of around 130 aren't far removed from the 200-odd Patriot

[99] Starkey, 'Paoli to Stony Point' in *The Journal of Military History*, 22.
[100] William Hull in *The Virginia Historical Register, and Literary Advertiser, Volume 1*, ed. William Maxwell (Richmond, VA: MacFarlane & Fergusson, 1848), 36.
[101] Shaw, *A Narrative of the Life and Travels of John Robert Shaw,* 23.
[102] William Jackson, 'Pension Application of William Jackson s38079 f90MD/PA/VA', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 28/04/2018.
[103] John Shiveley, 'Pension Application of John Shiveley R9521 f15VA', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 28/04/2018.
[104] Noel Battles, 'Pension Application of Noel Battles S12960', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 28/04/2018.

casualties sustained at Paoli, especially given the larger Patriot force present at Paoli.

The fact that nearly the greater part of the British garrison – five hundred men – were taken prisoner has frequently been cited as evidence that the Patriots, especially the Continental Army, avoided the massacres perpetrated by the British in the northern colonies. Recent authors such as Armstrong Starkey have argued that the Patriots at Stony Point demonstrated a 'higher moral standard than their opponents,' while biographers and aficionados of Anthony Wayne frequently cite the action as evidence that, besides being an active and aggressive commander, he was also humane in victory.[105] The battle has become a cornerstone of a section of historiography that claims the Patriots were less excessive in general when it came to military violence, and that the war was one of aggression by the British and restraint on behalf of the rebelling colonists. This is precisely the sort of narrative Congress sought to build on the backs of embarrassing military defeats such as Paoli and the Baylor incident. Their efforts were successful even among their enemies. British Admiral Sir George Collier noted the generosity and clemency the Continentals had conducted themselves with at Stony Point, while General James Pattison claimed that he had heard of no cruelties committed by the victors, in spite of the later claims by the Patriots about bloody slaughter, bayonets and the hanging of Loyalists in the fort after its fall.[106]

Even leaving out those aspects, Stony Point is insufficient as evidence that the Patriots practised greater restraint than the British or Loyalists. The primary reason there were fewer massacres committed by the Patriots from 1777 to 1779 is because they had fewer opportunities to do so. A number of obvious factors united almost all incidents of massacre during this middle phase of the war – Paoli, the Baylor incident, Little Egg Harbor, Hancock's bridge and Crooked Billet all occurred at night, were all surprise attacks, and were all conducted with an emphasis on close quarter combat. Such

[105] Starkey, 'Paoli to Stony Point' in *The Journal of Military History*, 24.
[106] Ibid, 23.

operations are among the most difficult of any war-time undertaking. Disregarding their moral fallout, all of the above engagements were victories for the Crown Forces, a remarkable success rate. And while full force organisation varied, with the exception of Little Egg Harbor the edge of British and Loyalist attacks were all led by one of two units – the regular light infantry, or Simcoe's Loyalist rangers.

Works by authors like Don Hagist and Matthew H. Spring have shown that in 1775 the British Army in North America was no more combat experienced than the Patriots, many of whom had greater first-hand experience from the Seven Years War. While that might mean that by 1777 both sides still possessed roughly the same degree of military competence, its use resulted in markedly different outcomes. In the British Army the ablest soldiers were often funnelled into the elite flank battalions – the light infantry and the grenadiers. While there was debate as to whether or not this starved the regular battalions of their best fighting men, it did mean that Howe and Clinton could rely on a number of crack battalions for vital operations. These units not only multiplied their capabilities by concentrating the best soldiers together, they also created an *esprit de corps* that was well documented by both their own side and the enemy. The light infantry generally showed no remorse for the massacres at Paoli and Tappan, in fact quite the opposite – the lyrics of one song dedicated to them boasted that 'Wayne, or hapless Baylor knows how swift their vengeance glides.'[107]

In the case of the Loyalists, the abilities of certain units can better be ascribed to the abilities their commanding officers. Regiments like the British Legion, the Queen's Rangers and Ferguson's rifle company were commanded by young and ambitious regular officers who moulded their units on the same aggressive fighting style as the light infantry. The perpetrators of massacres were therefore either the elite of the British Army or led by the most daring and capable regimental and brigade-level officers.

[107] 'The British Light-Infantry' in *The Loyalist Poetry of the American Revolution*, ed. Sargent Winthrop (Philadelphia, 1857), 80.

In 1777 and 1778 there was simply no Patriot equivalent to counter this. It is true that some units in the Continental Army earned a reputation effectiveness, such as the New Jersey brigade, described by Washington as 'one of the best in the army.'[108] The Continental Army was also slow to harness its light infantry, relying on a seasonally raised corps that only increased in ability as it consciously adopted British light infantry doctrines, having learned their effectiveness at the point of a bayonet. Militia units did fulfil numerous skirmishing and irregular warfare roles but were infamously unreliable and, by their very nature as part-time combatants, never built the cohesive unit identity championed by the most capable regiments.

This lack of combat units able to conduct special operations meant that, while battles like Germantown show that officers did use vengeance as a motivating factor on the battlefield, the Patriots simply did not have the ability to launch the repeatedly successful small to mid-scale strikes undertaken by Crown Forces in 1777 and 1778. It is at this point that Stony Point is usually held up as an example of the Patriots beating the British at their own game, and then being magnanimous in victory. But just how different was Stony Point from actions such as Paoli? The fact that British prisoners at the former numbered in their hundreds is due to the fact that they were trapped in the fort, whereas at Paoli hundreds of Patriots were able to flee into the night. André attests that the British started taking prisoners at Paoli after venting their initial bloodlust. It is therefore reasonable to assume that if the Patriots had been trapped at Paoli the way the British were at Stony Point, it would have resulting in hundreds of extra prisoners, rather than hundreds more bayoneted dead and wounded. Nor are the casualty ratios from either engagement vastly dissimilar - around 200 Patriot dead or wounded at Paoli from a force of 1,500, and between 90 and 130 British dead and wounded at Stony Point from a force of 750. Stony Point also did not lack accounts of extreme violence and the spectre of massacre, if Captain Campbell's or

[108] George Washington, 'To the New York Brigade' in *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745 - 1799, Volume 17*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1931), 429.

Lieutenant Colonel Hull's accounts are to be believed. Stony Point saw less bloodshed than Paoli, but it was in marginal degrees not sufficient to give substance to the idea that the Patriots were exceptionally more restrained than their enemies.

Despite espousing Stony Point as an example of mercy, Starkey is unable to account for the apparent leniency of the victors. He admits that Wayne himself was wounded early on, and so could not personally restrain his men in the thick of the action. He concludes that 'the officers and NCOs must have intervened to stop the killing, but they left no record of their actions at the decisive moment.'[109] Starkey does not seem to consider that he is admitting that the common virtuous citizen soldier espoused by Congress needed their officers and NCOs to stop them from shedding excessive amounts of blood. The truth is that in reality there was no peculiar leniency shown by either officers or men towards their captives. At both Paoli and Stony Point there was an initial bout of intensive bloodletting that then gave way to the standard eighteenth-century battlefield protocols of surrender.

If Congress did not have the military means to avenge British massacres until at least 1779, it did succeed in emphasising the narrative of violence that won the propaganda war during the mid-phase of the conflict. Patriot printers 'promoted incessantly the idea that Americans waged war with humanity and justice' while continuously highlighting and at times inflating the casualties inflicted by British operations.[110] Massacres such as the one at Tappan 'became a pivotal document in the patriot atrocity narrative' and helped emphasise the desperate nature of the struggle the rebels were engaged in, both to fellow colonists and oversees commentators.[111] Nor were the British subjected only to angry letters from Patriot commanders, quasi-legalistic formal investigations and accounts printed in Whiggish periodicals. In October 1778, Congress specifically addressed the issue of the massacres

[109] Starkey, 'Paoli to Stony Point' in *The Journal of Military History*, 23.
[110] Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 537.
[111] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 264.

that had taken place over the two years, drafting a manifesto following the 'cumulative impact of Hancock's Bridge, Crooked Billet, the so-called Paoli Massacre… and the Baylor Massacre, as well as an alleged British massacre at Little Egg Harbor.'[112] The manifesto spoke of how Crown Forces had 'laid waste the open country, burned the defenceless villages, and butchered the citizens of America.' It then went further by declaring that 'if our enemies presume to execute their threats, or persist in their present career of barbarity, we will take such exemplary vengeance, as shall deter others from a like conduct.'[113] Similarly, both John Adams and Benjamin Franklin were both predicting retaliatory massacres in 1778 in response to perceived heightened British aggression.[114]

Here then is the Patriot will for revenge following British atrocities, the desire echoed by Wayne and Hubley after Paoli, by Stephen after Crooked Billet and Laurens after Tappan. Massacres had continually raised the heat of the war during its second phase and progressively sharpened the Patriot response, and regardless of the restraint championed by many high-ranking commanders on both sides, on the frontier and in the south the Patriots would find themselves with the means to carry out extreme violence of their own.

[112]Hoock, 'Mangled Bodies' in *Past and Present*, 145.
[113] 'By the Congress of the United States of America: A Manifesto' in *Journals of the American Congress from 1774-1788: Volume III* (Washington DC: Way and Gideon, 1823), 107 – 108.
[114] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 271.

Chapter Four: Cherry Valley and Gnadenhutten

> Such a shocking sight my eyes never beheld before of savage and brutal barbarity; to see the husband mourning over his dead wife with four dead children lying by her side, mangled, scalpt, and some their heads, some their legs and arms cut off, some torn the flesh off their bones by their dogs - 12 of one family all killed and four of them burnt in his house.[1]

So wrote Benjamin Warren, a captain in the Continental Army, concerning the aftermath of a Crown Forces raid on the frontier settlement of Cherry Valley on November 13 1778. The attack saw an estimated 14 Patriot soldiers and 30 settlers killed, and around the same number captured. In justifying the killings to a Patriot colonel a month later, a group of Seneca wrote that, 'your rebels came to Oghwaga when we Indians were gone, and you burned our houses, which made us and our brothers, the Seneca Indians, angry, so that we destroyed men, women and children at Cherry Valley.' They went on to warn darkly that 'we, therefore, desire that you will let our brothers live in peace, lest you be worse dealt with, than your neighbours the Cherry Valley people was. You may think it's a hard winter that will hinder us from coming to you. I have big shoes and can come in a few days to your place.'[2]

Cherry Valley was the most infamous massacre committed by Crown Forces on the frontier. It was, however, also only one of many perpetrated by all sides during the course of the war. More so than any other theatre, the interior edges of the Thirteen Colonies saw widespread killing and maiming of the unarmed and the helpless, the destruction of property and possessions and the general use of violence on a huge and sustained scale.

It can be described as a war within a war or, more accurately, a conflict with neither a clear beginning nor a clear end. The bloodshed that remained near-

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[1] Benjamin Warren in *The Old New York Frontier: Its Wars with Indians and Tories, Its Missionary Schools, Pioneers and Land Titles, 1614 – 1800*, ed. Francis Whiting Halsey (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 1901), 242.

[2] William Johnston, Joseph Ceskwrora, William George, John, 'A Threatening Letter from Four Indian Chiefs, Decemb'r 13th 1778' in *Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York. 1777 – 1795 – 1801 – 1804 Volume IV* (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1900), 364.

continuous on the frontier between 1754 and 1815 was part of 'a broader conflict, a six-decade struggle for dominion over eastern North America… a single, prolonged struggle among Native Americans, Europeans and colonists for control.'[3] The years 1775 to 1783 should therefore be viewed only as a framework to discuss massacres on the frontier, with the violence perpetrated between Europeans and Natives both preceding and succeeding the specific years of the revolutionary struggle.

With the deeper racial antagonisms between colonists and Native Americans touched upon in chapter one, this chapter will look at two massacre case studies in particular – Cherry Valley in 1778 and Gnaddenhutten in 1781. These give us a framework to view the development of the so-called "Indian War" on the frontier, how it at times seemed to operate in isolation from the fighting further east, and how on other occasions it affected it directly, further highlighting the military significance of massacres not just as isolated incidents, but as a continuing thread throughout the Revolutionary War.

In his study of the role of violence in the founding of Britain's American colonies, Patrick Griffen writes that;

> While muted or forgotten in other areas of America, violence defined the frontier War of Independence… Gruesome warfare, an "American" way of warfare, which included "savage" behaviour and torture rituals, with whites outstripping Indians in their ferocity, proved the rule and not the exception… the nature of the bloodshed and of the racial tensions associated with it became defining hallmarks of western processes.[4]

While the idea of American exceptionalism in styles of warfare should not be overplayed, it is true that the colonies presented different challenges to eighteenth-century European or European-schooled commanders. The associated violence of the frontier, the previously-discussed rejection of concepts of white "civility" only accentuated this. What it created was a

[3] Francis Cogliano, 'The Sixty Years War in North America, 1754 – 1815' in *Early Modern Military History, 1450 – 1815*, ed. Geoff Mortimer (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 163.
[4] Griffin, 'Destroying and Reforming Canaan' in *Between Sovereignty and Anarchy*, 40.

separate but intersection sphere of conflict where acts of massacre and occasions of extreme violence received far less censure. Indeed, the raids, murders and skirmishes occurring from West Florida to Canada often did so in parallel with the wider Revolutionary War, rather than simply as a consequence of it. It should not be imagined therefore as simply another phase of the conflict, but as a separate dimension that intersected with the regular fighting further east, but was not dependent on its ebb and flow to define its level of violence. For example, there was a war being fought between the Shawnees, the Mingos and Lord Dunmore's colony of Virginia just six months prior to Lexington and Concord – the period was 'a time of mutual murder and pillage' on the eve of revolutionary events in distant New England, one that was only the latest in a long list of conflicts up and down the frontier.[5] Dunmore's unofficial war was a reflection of the widespread killings occurring all throughout the west – the mobilisation of both sides around the attacks already taking place were a far more serious business to settlers there than the comparatively tame occurrences of the powder alarms in Massachusetts, and indicate the degree to which the conflict there was already separate and alive prior to colonial militiamen firing on British regulars. As Hinderacker and Mancall state, 'from the perspective of the backcountry, the shots fired on the Ohio in 1774, not those at Concord six months later, constituted the beginning of the American Revolution.'[6]

Starting an Indian War

With bloodshed already occurring on the frontier, accusations of massacre soon spread throughout the colonies further east. A month before the British march on Lexington, at the settlement of Westminster in the New Hampshire Grants, colonial officials attacked a band of a hundred settlers protesting land claims in the disputed territory. Two were killed and eight wounded, leading to declarations of a massacre and a worsening of relationships between

[5] John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), 99.
[6] Eric Hinderacker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: John Hoskins University Press, 2003), 160.

imperial officers and colonists on the north-western frontier. Already stretched by the unrest across New England, Gage had no time to send troops to the hinterlands to enforce tenuous Crown authority, further contributing to the erosion of law and order that permitted the Patriot subversion of government.[7]

To the south Dunmore's War – set in motion by the dissatisfaction over the constant westward expansion of colonists into Native territory – had also been sparked into life by a specific act of massacre. On April 30 1774, at Yellow Creek in Ohio, a group of frontiersmen murdered the family of a Mingo chief, Logan. The Natives were lured in, shot and mutilated. The frontiersmen also 'strung up the pregnant sister of the Mingo chief Logan by her wrists, sliced open her belly with a tomahawk, and impaled her unborn child on a stake.'[8] The leader of the settlers who had committed the atrocity, Daniel Greathouse, was captured, tortured and murdered along with his wife by Natives seventeen years later.[9] [10]

Shocking though such murders were, they were far from unknown. On December 14 1763 a group of frontiersmen known as the Paxton Rangers attacked, massacred and scalped six peaceful Conestoga Natives in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. They killed 14 more on December 27, effectively wiping out the small tribe.[11] The events were considered shocking even among some colonists, with Benjamin Franklin penning *A Narrative of the Late Massacres,* wherein he declared that 'they [the Conestogas] would have been safe in any Part of the known World, except in the Neighbourhood

[7] William R. Nester, *The Frontier War for American Independence* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2004), 45.
[8] Faragher, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend*, 95 – 96.
[9] Michael A. Lofaro, *Daniel Boone: An American Life* (Lexington, KT: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 45.
[10] Ethan A. Schmidt, *Native Americans in the American Revolution: How the War Divided, Devastated and Transformed the Early American Indian World* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 82.
[11] Jack Brubaker, *Massacre of the Conestogas: On the Trail of the Paxton Boys in Lancaster County* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010), 11 – 12.

of the Christian white Savages of Peckstang and Donegall!'[12] Despite this, none of the perpetrators ever faced legal censure.

Six months after the twin massacres, four Lenape Natives attacked a schoolhouse in Conococheague, Pennsylvania, murdering and scalping the schoolmaster and nine children. On the way to the killings the Natives had already murdered a pregnant woman, Susan King Cunningham. They 'bludgeoned the woman to death, scalped her, and then ripped open her abdomen, placing the lifeless fetus next to her body.' The brutal murders prompted the Pennsylvania Assembly to reintroduce the payment of bounties in exchange for Native American scalps.[13]

It was against this backdrop that the attentions of both the British and the Patriots became pinned in mid to late 1775. An Indian war, as it was known, was initially not in the interests of either side, and both sought to lessen the impact of Native involvement rather than bring them into the conflict. The British 'limited their recruitment to avoid the negative publicity that enlisting Indians would generate' while the Patriots avoided it 'because they knew that they faced an insurmountable disadvantage in recruiting them.'[14] On the frontier, however, official government policy of any shade rarely held sway for long.

Ranking Patriots decided early on that spurning Native relations would reap more rewards than courting them. The Declaration of Independence ranks British alliances with Natives as one of the reasons for rebellion, stating that George III 'has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an

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[12] "*A Narrative of the Late Massacres*, [30 January? 1764]," *Founders Online,* National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-11-02-0012. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* vol. 11, *January 1, through December 31, 1764*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967, 42–69.]
[13] David Dixon, *Never Come to Peace Again: Pontiac's Uprising and the Fate of the British Empire in North America* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 223.
[14] Karim M. Tyro, 'Ambivalent allies: strategy and the Native Americans' in *Strategy in the American War of Independence: A Global Approach*, eds. Donald Stroker, Kenneth J. Hagan and Michael T. McMaster (New York: Routledge, 2010), 126.

undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.'[15] This in spite of the fact that during the period when the Declaration was being drafted one of the only tribes to have declared for either side, the Stockbridge, had aligned themselves with Congress. The Patriots also began seeding rumours of a British-sponsored campaign, claiming as early as mid-1775 that the Superintendent for Indian Affairs had instructed subordinates 'to start an Indian war' and that 'some thirty-four families were reported massacred' by the Cherokee.[16] Such rumours weren't only aimed towards at inciting the frontier, or even just revolution-minded colonists; the Patriots were aware that the idea of Natives being encouraged to ravage frontier settlements would be met with outrage by many in Britain as well. The Boston massacre and early responses to news about Lexington and Concord had shown that the British public could be susceptible to displays of colonial victimhood, both real and imagined. The atrocity narrative had a special place for stories concerning Natives.

The outbreak of the revolutionary war left many Native Americans facing the lesser of two evils. While the British government had frequently failed to honour or enforce agreements with Native tribes, the constant, immediate threat was from the colonists, and hence Congress. The revolution thus began to fuel the violence that was already endemic across the frontier, changing social customs as it did so and forcing frontier settlers – often abandoned by the warring factions further east – to look to their own security. In doing so aggressors were able to claim justification for some of the shocking massacres of the entire war.

The first major frontier campaign of the war flared in 1776 when the Cherokee, tired of surrendering their land in Tennessee, Kentucky and the Carolinas to the ever-encroaching colonists, refused to wait for promised British support (which, after defeat at Sullivan's Island that year, was unlikely

[15] *Thomas Jefferson, et al, July 4, Copy of Declaration of Independence*. -07-04, 1776. Manuscript/Mixed Material. https://www.loc.gov/item/mtjbib000159/.
[16] Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens, GA: Georgia University Press, 1989), 24.

to materialise anyway). They launched attacks on frontier settlements in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. After one clash a Patriot soldier recalled in his journal ‘a most dreadful sight to behold – our fellow creatures massacred by the heathens’ and, in another incident, of ‘seeing there what slaughter was made by our heathen enemies, by killing and scalping all they met with; this seemed terrifying, to see our fellow creatures lying dead and massacred in such as manner, as hindered us almost from interring or burying them.’[17] Of particular note was the murder of the wealthy and influential Hite family – Jacob Hite was killed at his home in August 1776, while his children and wife were initially taken prisoner and then later murdered as well, acts that were ‘used by the Whigs to justify their attack on the Cherokees.’[18]

Over the next three months four retaliatory militia expeditions ravaged Cherokee holdings. The Cherokee were one of the tribes furthest removed from centres of British control, and the lack of supplies and ammunition meant that they were unable to either effectively repulse the Patriot raids or withstand the famine that followed the destruction of so much of their harvest. The lack of material assistance to the Natives was in spite of the fact that the Cherokee’s activities on the frontier had kept thousands of militiamen from helping to repel the British campaign to seize Charleston.[19]

The overwhelming response from southern militia, supported by the Continental Army, saw over fifty Native settlements torched, and knocked the Cherokee out of the war until the British shifted the primary focus of their campaigns to the Southern theatre in 1780. Native factions acting independently, and the British slow to support their allies – it was a foretaste of what was to come.

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[17] Arthur Fairies, ‘Journal’ in 'Pension Application of Peter Clinton W9390 Frances B Clinton f56SC', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 30/05/2018.
[18] William T. Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary* (Lugoff, SC: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Press, 2012), 290.
[19] Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745 – 1815* (Baltimore: John Hoskins University Press, 1992), 53.

Near the Ohio River the following year a combined force of Wyandot, Mingo, Shawnee and Delaware attacked the Patriot garrison of Fort Henry. While the fort resisted, a nearby Patriot force commanded by Captain William Foreman were ambushed at the head of Grave Creek narrows. Of the forty-five men under Foreman's command, twenty-one were killed and several wounded.[20] A Patriot soldier garrisoned at Pittsburgh recorded hearing news 'of the massacre of Capt. Foreman and the greater portion of his command at grave creek narrows, ten miles below Wheeling.'[21] Such reports were becoming increasingly commonplace. Thomas Witten, employed in a company 'to perform frequent scouting expeditions as Indian spies, to defend the western frontier of Virginia… from the massacres of the Indians by whom the whole western border was then infested' recalled how he 'was an eye witness to some of the many instances of inhuman butchery and massacre committed upon the frontier families within range of his marches.'[22] Other such scouts and spies told similar stories – self-described Indian spy Moses Husstead recorded how a Native band 'on Hackers Creek massacred a few whites… through the course of this Summer the Indians made many incursions into the frontier settlements, committed many murders.'[23] Another Patriot, Hezekiah Hess, spoke of how 'a family on the head of the Tigert Valey [sic] were massacred by some stragling Indians' and later of 'a small party of Indians [who] made their appearance on Anthonies Creek… and massacred a part of two families, burnt their dwellings and out buildings, killed their cattle.'[24] Another scout, John Ryker, spoke of massacres near Bullets Lick

[20] Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston, SC: Babcock & Co, 1845), 369.
[21] Henry Yoho, 'Pension Application of Henry Yoho S7996' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 30/05/2018.
[22] Thomas Witten, 'Pension Application of Thomas Witten s6407' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 30/05/2018.
[23] Moses Husstead, 'Pension Application of Moses Husstead s9600' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 30/05/2018.
[24] Hezekiah Hess, 'Pension Application of Hezekiah Hess s8707' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 30/05/2018.

and Clear Station.[25] The Indian war that both sides had initially feared was not only underway, but was now being embraced by some British officials on the frontier.

In order to support Burgoyne's planned campaign to isolate New England from the rest of the colonies, British agents such as Superintendent for Indian Affairs Henry Hamilton began arming and motivating Native tribes in the Ohio and Great Lakes regions. Thousands of Native soldiers initially supported the Crown expedition in 1777. Relations quickly became strained however, and unrest reached a head following the murder of a Loyalist woman, Jane McCrea, most probably at the hand of Wyandots who squabbled over the prize they were to receive for successfully delivering her to the British camp. Mindful of losing Native support, Burgoyne refused to punish those responsible for the killing. Not only did the massacre of McCrea lead to a cooling of relations between the Natives and the British, but it also provided a fresh propaganda coup for the Patriots. When Burgoyne complained about the treatment of the 1,000 Crown prisoners taken after the battle of Bennington – including the summary executions of Loyalists – General Gates' reply made sure to reference McCrea's murder:

> That the famous Lieutenant General Burgoyne… should hire the savages of America to scalp Europeans and the descendants of Europeans, nay more, that he should pay a price for each scalp so barbarously taken, is more than will be believed in England… Miss McCrae, a young lady lovely to the sight, of virtuous character and amiable disposition, engaged to be married to an officer of your army, was… carried into the woods, and there scalped and mangled in the most shocking manner.[26]

The response was widely reprinted throughout the colonies and added yet more grist to the mill of Patriot propaganda. For Burgoyne it was only one among a slew of missteps and misfortunes; Burgoyne alienated both local

[25] John Ryker, 'Pension Application of John Ryker R9129 f20VA' Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 30/05/2018.
[26] Horatio Gates, 'Gates to Burgoyne' in *The War of the Revolution* by Christopher Ward, ed. John Richard Alden (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2011), 497.

colonists and his Native American allies at every turn.[27] The killings inflicted by the Natives also also helped to ensure that 'hundreds of militiamen from northern New England and New York turned out to oppose the British advance.'[28] By October 1777 Burgoyne and the remains of his army, trapped and alone in the frontier wilderness, had been forced to surrender, ultimately leading to French intervention and turning the tide of the war.

Burgoyne's defeat ended large-scale British campaigning in upstate New York. This left the door in the north-west open to the frontier warfare many on both sides had both feared and predicted. The Crown pursued a policy of coordinating Loyalists and allied Native Americans from the Province of Quebec, which had resisted a Patriot invasion in 1775. The British government, through agents like Hamilton, then expanded this campaign and sponsored its partisans to harass and attack Patriot-held settlements, particularly focussing on the fertile Mohawk Valley. Prominent Loyalist John Butler established a corps of volunteers known as Butler's rangers to conduct raids, assisted primarily by the Seneca tribesmen led by Iroquois chiefs Cornplanter and Sayenqueraghta, as well as Mohawks commanded by Joseph Brant.

Accusations of Massacre at Wyoming

Besides a successful raid by Brant on the settlement of Cobleskill in May 1778 – one that resulted in five men being burned alive and the mutilation and possible torture of others – the first military engagement on the northern frontier since Saratoga occurred in early July, after John Butler and his joint Native-Loyalist party pushed into the Wyoming Valley. [29] After convincing the Patriot militia garrisoning Fort Wintermute to surrender, Butler then laid an ambush for a larger force gathering at nearby Forty Fort. He had Wintermute torched to make the militia and the small Continental Army unit accompanying them believe the Crown troops were withdrawing, luring them

[27] Cogliano, 'The Sixty Years War in North America' in *Early Modern Military History*, 168.
[28] Ibid, 167.
[29] Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 249.

into attacking his exposed rangers. The rangers held their fire until the militia had been drawn to within a hundred yards, and Butler's Natives had infiltrated their left flank via nearby marshland. When the ambush was sprung the militia panicked and attempted to flee. Of the 360 Patriots caught in the counter-attack no less than 302 were killed, including 34 officers and nearly all the Continentals. Butler reported to Colonel Bolton, British commander at Fort Niagara, that his men had taken 227 scalps and just five prisoners, adding 'the Indians were so exasperated with their loss last year near Fort Stanwix that it was with the greatest difficulty I could save the lives of those few.[3031]

Following the action Forty Fort surrendered. Butler retained control of his men, having the liquor in the fort destroyed before they could lay hands on it. Besides a few cases of plundering, none of the locals or the surrendering soldiers were harmed. Butler himself appears to have been pleased by the restraint shown by those under his command, writing 'what gives me the sincerest satisfaction is that I can, with great truth, assure you that in the destruction of the settlement not a single person was hurt except such as were in arms, to these, in truth, the Indians gave no quarter.'[32] Nor does his report seem to have been the case of a commanding officer wilfully overlooking his men's excesses. A local wrote afterwards that 'happily these fierce people, satisfied with the death of those who had opposed them in arms, treated the defenseless ones, the woman and children, with a degree of humanity almost hitherto unparalleled.'[33]

If Butler and at least some of those living in the area felt that the Crown Forces had behaved with moderation, that was certainly not the view that spread beyond the Wyoming Valley in the days and weeks afterwards.

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[30] John Butler, 'Major John Butler to Lieutenant Colonel Bolton,' in *Wyoming; its History, Stirring Incidents, and Romantic Adventures*, ed. George Peck (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1858), 53.
[31] Cruikshank, *Butler's Rangers*, 47 – 48.
[32] Joseph Butler, *So Obstinately Loyal: James Moody, 1744-1809*, ed. Susan Burgess Shenstone (Montreal: McGuill-Queen's University Press), 60.
[33] Hector St. John Crevecoeur, *In Pursuit of Liberty: Coming of Age in the American Revolution*, ed. Emmy E. Werner (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 62.

Despite the fact Butler 'managed to protect surrendering survivors among militia as well as civilians' the Patriots 'cried massacre. They exaggerated the number of dead to four hundred and embellished lurid stories of atrocity.'[34] There were accusations that Butler had ordered non-combatants confined to their homes while the buildings were torched, and that a Native American woman with the expedition had 'lined up 15 prisoners, each held by two warriors, around a great rock and then personally tomahawked each victim one by one.'[35] Such stories are perhaps understandable given the valley's inhabitants 'grieving and destitute… could easily have embellished their own very real misfortunes with tales of even greater horror.' [36] The narrative certainly fitted easily into preconceived colonial notions about Indian warfare. As well as helping vent the grief of the defeated it provided an opportunity for Patriot authorities to lambast the British for finding common cause with such perceived wickedness. Wyoming was described as a massacre or a battle 'depending on which side tells the tale,' an aspect by now familiar for almost every contentious engagement during the war.[37] Barbara Graymont, in her study of the Iroquois during the Revolution, points out – perhaps with a little too much simplicity but certainly the ring of truth – that 'whites have always been prone to label any overwhelming Indian victory a massacre and to call any of their own battle triumphs over Indians a great victory.'[38]

Such was the price in public perceptions that the British paid for allying themselves with the Native tribes. Nor did the accusations that the Wymoning Valley had been the scene of a massacre desist after the war. As we have seen with many other incidents, the action became part of the wider nineteenth century remembrance of the revolutionary struggle. Quoting Butler's claim that his men had behaved well following the clash, one author in 1858 scathingly wondered 'what became of those who were taken

[34] Hoock, *Scars of Independence,* 276.
[35] Harry M. Ward, *The War for Independence and the Transformation of American Society* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 199.
[36] Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 174.
[37] Edward G. Gray and Jane Kamensky, *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 242.
[38] Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 174.

prisoner? What became of the wounded… they were all massacred in cold blood, with the exception of two who lived to return.'[39] Similarly, in 1809 Scots poet Thomas Campbell, in his popular piece *Gertrude of Wyoming*, described Joseph Brandt as a monster, incorrectly believing he had been present at the engagement. He wrote of how he and 'his howling desolating band' had 'left of all my tribe, Nor man, nor child, nor thing of living birth: No! not the dog, that watch'd my household hearth, Escap'd, that night of blood, upon our plains!'[40]

While the idea of Wyoming as a massacre persisted – 'accounts abounded of the wonton slayings, torture of captives, and sufferings of exposed women and children fleeing through the swamps.'[41] Yet, though it remained a minority, not all nineteenth-century commentary supported the accusations of murder levelled at Butler or Brant. One work in 1893 made an observation on the nature of massacres in general, categorising the massed killing of military combatants as less damning than the massed killing of civilians:

> This tale of horror was eagerly circulated to throw odium upon the loyalists, and has been repeated with little variation down to the present day. Undoubtedly there was a "massacre" at Wyoming, but it was of strong men flying from a lost battle, not of prisoners or helpless women and children as they represented.[42]

Once again, the accusations of massacre would have a profound and measurable impact on future military engagements – indeed, 'the representation of the Wyoming Massacre would produce far more bloodshed than the attack itself.'[43] As we have seen from their letter in December 1778, the Seneca took the claims that they had slaughtered civilians to heart, angry that they were the subjects of aspersions despite having shown restraint, as

[39] George Peck, *Wyoming; Its History, Stirring Incidents, and Romantic Adventures* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1858), 54.
[40] Thomas Campbell, 'Desolation of Wyoming; A Picture of the Miseries Attending the American Civil War' in *Beauties of the Modern Poets*, ed. David Carey (London: William Wright, 1821), 130.
[41] Max M. Mintz, *Seeds of Empire: The American Revolutionary Conquest of the Iroquois* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 97.
[42] Cruikshank, *Butler's Rangers*, 49.
[43] Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 416.

well as the fact that Patriots captured at Forty Fort had later reneged on their parole and joined raiding parties in retaliatory attacks on Native settlements.

Following the attack on Wyoming Butler's rangers and Brant's Natives successfully struck at settlements at German Flats, Shawnee Flats and Lackawanna. On all three occasions the civilian population was spared, a fact that ensured the attacks were 'usually omitted from retellings' and ignored by settlers 'to cry up the "massacre" of Wyoming.'[44] Stories of the exaggerated massacre helped fuel an expedition by Patriot Colonel Thomas Hartley, whose 'pure raids against civilians' killed both British-allied and neutral Natives with a view 'to retake the fertile Wyoming Valley for the settlers.'[45] The cycle of frustrations and retaliatory killings on the north-western frontier continued to escalate throughout the year, with the Iroquois becoming incensed that men they had earlier paroled 'continued attacking and agitating against the Iroquois, often from the American stronghold of Cherry Valley.' One early twentieth-century writer characterised it as a 'summer of terror' when 'society was clove asunder.'[46] The bloodshed, destruction and displacement along the frontier came to focus on this particular area, ensuring that 'Cherry Valley was a vortex of internecine violence by the fall of 1778.'[47]

Massacre at Cherry Valley

Cherry Valley was a strategically placed community on the headwaters of the Susquehanna River, sited in an geographic locale that made it difficult for Crown Forces to operate with impunity out of Fort Niagara. It has been described as 'one of the finest settlements on the entire frontier and the principal settlement south of the Mohawk' – the fertile land provided supplies to Washington's forces in the east and acted as a staging post and

[44] Barbara Alice Mann, *George Washington's War on Native America* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 20.
[45] Ibid, 21.
[46] Henry U. Swinnerton, *The Story of Cherry Valley* (Cherry Valley, NY, 1908), 9 – 10.
[47] Mann, *George Washington's War*, 21 – 22.

stronghold for the Patriots of upstate New York.[48] Removing the protection the settlement offered and seizing its supplies became the objective of a joint British-Loyalist-Native raid in late 1778. Understanding the need to help sustain their allies particularly when Patriot retaliation threatened their ability to continue to wage war, British officials in Niagara sanctioned the attack with a view to easing the pressure mounting amongst the Iroquois. In order to take the settlement two companies of Loyalists commanded by John Butler's son, Walter Butler, combined with Native Americans led by their own chiefs and Brant, and a company of British regulars from the 8th Foot. The Native contingent consisted again primarily of Senecas, but also included Mohawks under Brant, Cayugas, Onondagas, Delawares and Tuscaroras. Many of them had been involved in resisting the earlier raids of Thomas Hartley, and were primed for retaliation against an enemy they viewed as duplicitous and ruthless.[49]

The operation began badly – command of the expedition was fraught. Butler and Brant quarrelled, Butler seemingly jealous of Brant's ability to attract Loyalist recruits while his own rangers were lacking in manpower, while Brant appeared doubtful of Butler's leadership qualities during his first solo command. Brant was on the brink of leaving, but was convinced to carry on by members of his own band. He did, however, lose control of ninety of his Loyalist volunteers, who deserted the expedition after Butler chose to threaten them over supplies. By the time they descended on the settlement the number of combatants involved in the raid likely sat around 640.[50]

Having essentially surrendered control of his Native allies by making an enemy of Brant, Butler would be unable to dissuade the Seneca from the main reason they had joined the expedition – revenge. The multitude of issues that had exasperated the Seneca – the insults of Patriot officers who claimed they'd committed atrocities at Wyoming, those who'd broken their

[48] J. H. Livingston, *Joseph Brant, 1743-1807; Man of Two Worlds***, ed.** Isabel Thompson Kelsay (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984)
[49] Mann, *George Washington's War*, 21.
[50] Ibid, 24.

parole and the burning of Native American villages, at least one of which was peaceful and not actively involved in the conflict – all combined to create the very real threat that the violence at Cherry Valley would escalate beyond control.[51] The specific need to retaliate differentiated the Cherry Valley raid from those that had occurred earlier in the year, and ensured an increasingly familiar outcome regarding the treatment of civilians and surrendering soldiers.

Cherry Valley was defended by a palisade fort held by a garrison of Continental Army regulars, but their commander, Colonel Ichabod Alden, had refused to act on reports that Crown Forces were planning an attack on his post. He continued to live with many of his officers in a house outside the fort, belonging to a family called the Wells. Having captured the Patriot piquets without raising the alarm the night before, the Loyalists began their attack early on 11 November, splitting their efforts between the fort and Alden's billet. The Wells house was quickly overrun. Alden was killed while fleeing from the house to the fort, supposedly tomahawked by Brant himself. Including Alden, sixteen Continentals died in or near the Wells house. This time the Seneca who led the attack did not stop at enemy combatants, swiftly adding the entire Wells family, trapped inside their home, to the list of casualties despite their personal friendship with Brant.

The other attack against the fort palisade failed to carry it, so instead the Seneca turned their aggression on the rest of the settlement, this time ignoring pleas from Butler and Brant to show restraint. Up to thirty-two non-combatants were killed, and the Loyalists were left protecting the Continental garrison in the fort. Nor were the casualties restricted to those with Whiggish sympathies. A number of defenceless Loyalists were also murdered, with Brant having to personally intervene on behalf of those he knew to be supporters of the king, using his own Mohawks to fend off the Seneca.[52]

[51] Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 183 - 184.
[52] Ibid, 188 – 189.

The settlement outside of the fort was put to the torch. The horror for the inhabitants was not at an end though – at least seventy were carried off into captivity the next day. After efforts by Brant around forty were allowed to return a day later, most of them Loyalists. Others were less lucky – one elderly woman was tomahawked by her captors when she could not keep up with the group.[53]

Accounts of the incident were universal regarding the nature of the attacks on non-combatants. Captain Benjamin Warren, as we have seen, stepped from the safety of the fort the day after the raiding party had withdrawn, and found himself in murderous desolation. Unlike Wyoming, where Brant had been the subject of much criticism from the Patriots despite not actually being present, this time it was Butler who received the greatest public censure. One commentator told of rumours of 'between 30 & 40 Women & Children butchered in the most unheard of manner,' and that Brant had disapprovingly told the ruthless Butler that 'he would never have a hand in Massacring the Defenceless Inhabitants.' The account closed by claiming that 'had the British leaders or the British King been actuated by Sentiments of this sort the American War would not have been Stained with such unparalleled cruelty, nor the name of Briton so justly execrated throughout these States.'[54]

Walter Butler himself could not deny that he had lost control and a massacre had taken place, though he also blamed the untruths spread about the earlier engagement at Wyoming. In a letter to the British commander of Fort Niagara he lamented that:

> Not withstanding my utmost precautions to save the women and children, I could not prevent some of them falling victim to the fury of the savages… The death of the women and children on this occasion may, I believe, be truly ascribed to the rebels having falsely accused the Indians of cruelty at Wyomen. This has much exasperated them, and they are still more incensed at finding that the colonel and those who had then laid down

[53] Ibid, 189.
[54] Livingston, *Joseph Brant*, 233.

> their arms, soon after marched into their country intending to destroy their villages.[55]

The incident was picked up by both Patriot commanders and colonial periodicals – one author has even gone so far as to claim that the failure of nearby Patriot forces to respond to rumours of the raid indicates that 'someone in authority surmised that another "massacre" like Wyoming would be good for propaganda purposes.'[56] While such a degree of ruthlessness is surely unfounded, Patriot sources did, naturally, take up the opportunity to repeat the atrocity narrative, lent extra verve by the fact that this massacre was the work of Britain's Native allies. General James Clinton of the Continental Army wrote a scathing letter directly to Walter Butler after detaining members of his family, stating that:

> The enormous murders committed at Wyoming and Cherry Valley would clearly have justified a retaliation; and that your mother did not fall a sacrifice to the resentment of the survivors of those families who were so barbarously massacre, is owing to the humane principles which the conduct of their enemies evinces a belief that they are utterly strangers to.[57]

Clinton's emphasis on restraint conforms to the by now well-established Patriot desire to carefully highlight both the brutality of Crown Forces and their own juxtaposed humanity. Patriot periodicals mirrored Clinton's language. The *New Jersey Gazette* reported two weeks after the attack that 'the enemy killed, scalped, and most barbarously murdered, thirty-two inhabitants, chiefly women and children, also Colonel Alden… They committed the most inhuman barbarities on most of the dead… the lieutenant-colonel, all the officers and continental soldiers, were stripped and drove naked before them.'[58] As it had done at Paoli and would do again at Waxhaws, the name of the engagement soon became synonymous with

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[55] Walter Butler, 'To Colonel Bolton, camp at Unadilla, November 17 1778' in *Transactions of the Canadian Institute, Volume 5* (Toronto: Murray Printing Company, 1898), 259.
[56] Mann, *George Washington's War*, 22.
[57] James Clinton, 'General Clinton to Captain Butler, Albany, January 1st, 1779' in *Life of Joseph Brant Thayendanegea Including the Border Wars of the American Revolution, Volume 1*, ed. William Leete Stone (New York: Alexander V. Blake, 1838), 383.
[58] The New Jersey Gazette, November 25, 1778 in *Diary of the American Revolution: From Newspapers and Original Documents, Volume 2,* ed. Frank Moore (New York: Charles Scribner, 1858), 105.

massacre and the refusal to take prisoners; ‘Cherry Valley quarter’ was supposedly the cry of one of the Patriot-allied Oneida who killed and scalped Walter Butler himself in 1781.[59] Both Wyoming and Cherry Valley were invoked by Patriot officials and officers to help promote the later Sullivan expedition, framing the campaign as ‘avenging the “massacres”’ and ‘righteous retaliation for Wyoming and Cherry Valley.’[60] Once again, a massacre had taken place that would continue to claim lives for years afterwards, and have an impact far greater than the numbers of either perpetrators or victims would suggest.

Race and the Normalisation of Frontier Massacres

While horror at the events of Cherry Valley resonated throughout the colonies, the frontier conflict witnessed numerous similar incidents overlooked by the popular press in the east. Bloodshed, the destruction of property and wide-scale displacement fed into the cycle of violence that both predated and outlived the revolution, helping to frame acts of massacre as the norm. Such activities were also fuelled in no small part by the Patriot atrocity narrative, that ran into overtime attempting to enhance and exploit the bloodshed, thus helping to perpetrate a cycle of violence. Thus ‘Patriot publicity helped create a milieu that made conditions ripe for atrocity.’[61] During the period, while active fighting (and its attendant diseases) claimed roughly one in every 1,000 colonists living east of the Appalachians, in places such as Kentucky in the west as many as one in every 70 settlers were killed.[62] Events like the killings and retaliations in the Wyoming Valley resulted in the inhabitants of that locale having ‘lost more friends and kin than they could possibly bury.’[63]

Massacres also helped decide who became engaged in the fighting, and thus the wider war. Colonists were encouraged to enlist by Congress in order to

[59] Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 249.
[60] Mann, *George Washington’s War*, 27.
[61] Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 539.
[62] Faragher, *Daniel Boone*, 144.
[63] Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 174.

defend their homes, and Patriot soldiers were encouraged to retaliate, influenced by 'the fearsome stories of Indian massacres.'[64] Individual atrocities likewise decided the loyalties of whole tribes. The murder of Shawnee chief Cornstalk at Fort Randolph by Patriot militiamen in late 1777, for example, ended the efforts of a part of the Shawnee tribe to remain neutral, and brought them in on the side of the British. Lenape chief White Eyes, whose people actually supported Congress, was also murdered in 1778, with the Patriots claiming he had died from smallpox in an effort to appease their Lenape allies. Such killings 'usually just provoked the survivors' followers to swell the vicious cycle of death and destruction.'[65] The racial components of the murders were also clear; all conflicts on the frontier held at the very least an undercurrent of racial hatred, and it would not be inaccurate to call the fighting before, during and after the revolution 'a racial war without mercy.'[66]

These racial and ethnic tones are not difficult to trace in the reprisals that exacerbated the extreme violence of the frontier. After Cherry Valley it was clear that 'the type of Indian war the Whigs feared the most had become a reality.'[67] The damage wreaked by Native and Crown forces had begun to affect Patriot operations further east, diverting attention from the Continental Army's operations against the British around New York. 'The Wyoming Massacre of 3 July 1778 and the Cherry Valley affair of 11 November created turmoil along the frontier and eventually evoked a response' – the following year the Patriots conducted a series of systematic reprisals known as the Sullivan expedition. [68] Conceived of by Washington and organised by his staff, its objectives were, according to Washington himself:

> The total destruction and devastation of their settlements and the capture of as many prisoners of every age and sex as possible. It will be essential to ruin their crops now in the

[64] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 277.
[65] Nester, *The Frontier War*, 18.
[66] Ibid, 1.
[67] Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 189.
[68] Stanley D. M. Carpenter, *Southern Gambit: Cornwallis and the British March to Yorktown* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 34.

> ground and prevent their planting more… But you will not by any means listen to [any] overture of peace before the total ruin of their settlements is effected.[69]

Washington, of course, was no stranger to Indian warfare, having fought both against and alongside Natives numerous times during the Seven Years War. From June to September 1779 John Sullivan and his troops ravaged Iroquois settlements, torching over 40 villages and destroying large stocks of supplies required by the Natives during the winter months. Nor did the Patriots bother to differentiate a great deal between those tribes of the Iroquois that had aligned themselves with the British and those who had come down on their own side – several friendly settlements were destroyed, and the annihilation of supplies had as great an effect on their own Native American allies as it did on their foes. Ultimately the ravages of the Sullivan expedition 'hardened Iroquois antagonism toward the US' and served to bring groups like the Seneca and the Cayuga – targeted by Sullivan despite the neutral status of some of their villages – 'further into alignment with the British.'[70] In one particularly brutal incident two villages that had avoided allying to either side, at Coshicton and Lichtenau were burned, a chief named Red Eagle was murdered and all the males over the age of twelve were executed.[71]

Race-based antagonisms also extended to the attitudes of white combatants towards one another. Those British and Loyalist soldiers who commanded or sponsored Native military activity earned particular ire from their colonial enemies. Loyalists and British officers and officials operating alongside Natives also used the greater freedom they enjoyed while serving on the frontier to perpetrate the massacre of their enemies. At Cherry Valley 'rangers were certainly active in the massacre' and possibly killed more than the Natives they blamed for the bloodshed.[72] Clinton's letter to Butler

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[69] George Washington, 'From George Washington to Major General John Sullivan, 31 May 1779.' Founders Online, accessed 20.06.2017 https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-20-02-0661

[70] Karim M. Tyro, 'Ambivalent allies' in *Strategy in the American War of Independence*, 129.

[71] James M. Volo, Dorothy Denneen Volo, *Family Life in Native America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 342 – 343.

[72] Mann, *George Washington's War*, 25.

emphasises the barbarity of the Loyalists in comparison with their allies, with the Continental officer writing that:

> I should hope, for the sake of human nature and the honor of civilized nations, that the British officers had exerted themselves in restraining the barbarity of the savages. But it is difficult even for the most disinterest mind to believe it, as numerous instances of barbarity have been perpetrated where savages were not present – or, if they were, the British forces was not sufficient to restrain them, had there been a real desire to do so.[73]

Another Patriot recalled how, in the wake of the battle of Oriskany in August 1777, he was taken prisoner:

> A Lieutenant in the Indian department came up in company with several other tories, when said Mr. Grinnis by name, drew his tomahawk at this deponent, and with a deal of persuasion was hardly prevailed on to spare his life. He then plundered him… and other tories following his example, stripped him almost naked with a great many threats, while they were stripping and massacreing [sic] prisoners on every side… on being brought before Mr. Butler, Sen. [Walter Butler's father] who demanded of him what he was fighting for; to which this deponent answered "he fought for the liberty that God and Nature gave him, and to defend himself and dearest connexions from the massacre of savages"… several prisoners were taken forward towards the enemy's head-quarters with frequent scenes of horror and massacre, in which tories were as active as well as savages… That Lieut. Singleton, of Sir John Johnson's regiment, being wounded, entreated the savages to kill the prisoners, which accordingly they did.[74]

Indeed, conceiving of frontier Loyalists as more detestable than Natives became a common motif for Patriot writers throughout the war. One account claimed that 'an Indian having refused to kill an infant as it lay smiling in the cradle, the more savage loyalist, rebuking the compassion of the red man, thrust it through with his bayonet.'[75] Another story told of Brant returning a

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[73] Clinton, 'General Clinton to Captain Butler' in *Life of Joseph Brant*, 383.
[74] Moses Younglove 'The Battle of Oriskany' in *The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries Concerning the Antiquities, History and Biography of America, Vol. III. Second Series*, ed. Henry B. Dawson (Morrisania, NY: Henry B. Dawnson, 1868), 248.
[75] William Leete Stone, *Life of Joseph Brant Thayendanegea including the Border Wars of the American Revolution, Volume 2* (New York: George Dearborn and Co, 1838), 126.

captured child with a letter stating '*I* do not make war on women and children. I am sorry to say that I have those engaged with me in the service, who are more savage than the savages themselves.'[76] The lyrics of a song published in the *Pennsylvania Packet* in 1780 capture the attitude of Patriots towards their American enemies, stating that Britain, 'to take our lives and scalps away, the savage Indians keeps in pay, and Tories worse, by half, than they.'[77]

For their own part, Loyalists were often happy to imitate Natives while on campaign. At the purported Wyoming massacre, for example, 'many of the Europeans dressed as Natives.'[78] Just prior to the attack at Cherry Valley Colonel Alden reported that he had captured 'two of Brant's party, who ware Collecting Cattel at the Butternuts for Brant. Ware Clothed and painted Like Indians.'[79] In 1781 Loyalist William Sommer admitted that during a raid 'we were all painted and equipped like Indians as were all the Tories belonging to the party.'[80] Such an act was far from uncommon – Brant's 'volunteers regularly dressed as Iroquois, donned war paint, and took up Iroquoian customs. The Americans, ever apt to exaggerate and sensationalize, consistently presented these Tories as bona fide Mohawks.'[81] One Patriot militiaman recalled 'Tory fiends & Indian massacre. - There were more indeed & more [indecipherable word] then danger & injury from the British Army by whom they were encouraged, sometimes assisted & always communicated with from those British forts.'[82] While aping Native dress and customs handed a propaganda victory to the Patriots, at least some Loyalists on the frontier appear to have perceived benefit in such a practice, namely

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[76] Ibid.
[77] 'To the Traitor Arnold' in *Songs and Ballads of the American Revolution*, ed. Frank Moore (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1856), 334.
[78] Mann, *George Washington's War*, 17.
[79] Ichabod Alden, 'Colonel Alden's Report to General, Stark' in *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York, Volume 9* (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1901), 416.
[80] William Sommer, 'Affidavit of William Sommer' in *Public Papers of George Clinton First Governor of New York, Volume VII* ed. Hugh Hastings (Albany: Oliver A. Quayle, 1904), 81.
[81] Ibid, 9.
[82] Charles Jordan, 'Pension Application of Charles Jordan R5761 Frances Jordan fn31GA', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 30/05/2018.

the ‘plausible deniability it lent their European commanders’ – Loyalists perpetrating massacres while dressed as Natives could be more easily dismissed as auxiliaries by British officers, beyond accountability and reproach.[83]

Walter Butler harnesses the powers of deniability in a letter refuting accusations of massacre, writing first that ‘we deny any *cruelties* to have been committed at *Wyoming*, either by whites or Indians’ and then that ‘the inhabitants killed at Cherry Valley does not lay at my door – my conscience acquits.’ Aware of the Patriots’ capacity to publicise Crown brutality, he considered himself ‘under the disagreeable necessity to declare the charge unjust and void of truth, and which can only tend to deceive the world, though a favorite cry of the Congress on every occasion, whether in truth or not.’[84]

Regardless of their efforts to shift the blame, British officers in command of Natives and Loyalist irregulars risked harsh treatment when they fell into the hands of the Patriots. Encouraging the massacre of white settlers could mean forfeiting the rights usually afford to European officers. This is most clearly apparent with the fate of Henry Hamilton, one of the war’s most prominent British Superintendents of Indian Affairs. Hamilton was installed at Detroit just after the revolutionary war had begun, and by 1777 was putting into practice the broader British policy to bring the Native tribes into the Crown Forces fold, arming them and providing officers to direct their efforts in the field. His role in coordinating Native attacks in Ohio and Kentucky earned him the moniker ‘hair-buy general’ among the rebels, following reports that he was paying Natives to bring in the scalps of frontier settlers.[85] In 1778, as well as laying the groundwork for a grand alliance of pro-British northern and southern Native tribes, Hamilton personally led an expedition over 600 miles

[83] Sommer, ‘Affidavit of William Sommer’ in *Public Papers of George Clinton*, 9.
[84] Walter Butler, ‘Captain Butler to General Clinton, Niagara, 18th Feb. 1779’ in *Life of Joseph Brant Thayendanegea Including the Border Wars of the American Revolution, Volume 1*, ed. William Leete Stone (New York: Alexander V. Blake, 1838), 385.
[85] Bernard W. Sheehan, ‘“The Famous Hair Buyer General”: Henry Hamilton, George Rogers Clark, and the American Indian,’ in the *Indiana Magazine of History*, vol. 79, no. 1, 1983. 13 – 14.

to retake Fort Sackville at Vincennes, which had fallen to the Patriots earlier that year.

Hamilton was then taken by surprise when another Patriot expedition, led by George Rogers Clark, returned to Vincennes in February of 1779. In order to seize Vincennes Clark employed the frontier brutality that was so familiar to both sides. Knowing that he would be unable to either storm the fort or starve its garrison into submission, Clark sought to intimidate Hamilton into surrender. Four Native prisoners were 'tomahawked in full view of the townspeople and the fort,' before being scalped and dumped into the nearby river. Clark then met with Hamilton to discuss terms while 'covered in blood and sweat'[86] and 'boasted of his part in the massacre.'[87] He exaggerated the size of his own force, claimed he could barely restrain his men from storming the fort, and made dark hints about Hamilton's complicity in unleashing unrestrained Indian warfare on the frontier.[88]

All of this proved too much for Hamilton, and he agreed to Clark's demands. Doing so provided little relief for either him or his men. Contrary to the surrender agreement, a number of Hamilton's soldiers were bound and he himself barely avoided several attempts by Clark's associates to murder him. He spent over a year in miserable prison conditions in Williamsburg, Virginia.[89]

The order of the Virginia Council of State that confined him provides a good indication of the consequences for those perceived to have incited Native massacres against American colonists. Among numerous other accusations against Hamilton it claimed he 'gave standing rewards for scalps, but offered none for prisoners' and recommended that he 'be put into irons, confined in the dungeon of the publick jail, debarred the use of pen, ink, and paper, and

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[86] Robert L. Tonsetic, *Special Operations in the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2013), 242.
[87] Ethan A. Schmidt, *Native Americans in the American Revolution: How the War Divided, Devastated and Transformed the Early American Indian World* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 140.
[88] Tonsetic, *Special Operations*, 242.
[89] Mann, *George Washington's War*, 117.

excluded all converse except with their keeper,' a sentence that went against eighteenth-century codes of conduct regarding captured officers.[90]

The council also used the opportunity to reinforce the longstanding belief that Britain's representatives in the colonies had been acting with undue prejudice since the beginning of the war, stating that 'the conduct of the British officers, civil and military, has in its general tenor, through the whole course of this war, been savage and unprecedented among civilized nations.'[91] Such declarations echoed the sentiments being espoused by the atrocity narrative since the early days of the Boston shootings, and were in step with numerous previous comments about British barbarism, from Saratoga to Paoli.

Whilst maintaining the image of the British as excessively cruel remained a priority, the reality by 1779 had changed slightly, as expressed by Washington privately in his correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. Speaking on the wider treatment of Patriot prisoners since General Clinton had assumed overall command of British operations in North America, Washington admitted 'that there will be no necessity for a competition in cruelty with the enemy. Indeed it is but justice to observe, that of late, or rather since Sir Henry Clinton has had the command, the treatment of our prisoners has been more within the line of humanity, and in general very different from that which they experienced under his predecessors.'[92] This represents a scaling back of the violent conduct of the British Army from the years 1777 and 1778, and shows an understanding of importance of the colonial perception of Crown forces, especially among commanders like

[90] "Order of Virginia Council of State Placing Henry Hamilton and Others in Irons, 16 June 1779," *Founders Online,* National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-01-02-0097. [Original source: *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 1, *16 March 1751–16 December 1779*, ed. William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962, 288–292.]
[91] Ibid.
[92] "To Thomas Jefferson from George Washington, 23 November 1779," *Founders Online,* National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-03-02-0217. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 3, *18 June 1779–30 September 1780*, ed. Julian Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, 198–199.]

Clinton, who once wrote to George Germain stating that 'to gain the hearts and subdue the minds of America was in my opinion worthwhile.'[93]

Regarding Hamilton's specific treatment, Washington initially had no sympathy for him and believed his involvement in orchestrating Indian warfare warranted his imprisonment. Again writing to Jefferson, he stated that 'I have no doubt of the propriety of the proceedings against Governor Hamilton… Their cruelties to our unhappy people who have fallen into their hands—and the measures they have pursued to excite the savages to acts of the most wanton barbarity—discriminate them from Common prisoners, and most fully authorise the treatment decreed in their case.'[94]

One month later however, Washington changed his opinion on Hamilton's treatment. He wrote to Jefferson saying that regardless of the fact that his confinement was 'founded in principles of a just retaliation' he had come to be of the opinion that 'Mr Hamilton could not, according to the usage of War after his Capitulation, even in the manner it was made, be subjected to any uncommon severity.' He went on to say that 'Whether it may be expedient to continue him in his present confinement from motives of policy and to satisfy our people… it may be proper to publish all the Cruelties he has committed or abetted… that the World, holding his conduct in abhorrence, may feel and approve the justice of his fate. Indeed, whatever may be the line of conduct towards him, this may be adviseable.'[95]

More interesting than Washington's change of tack is the fact that he felt the need to address the opinions of 'our people' – regardless of Hamilton's part

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[93] Henry Clinton, 'Account of his conversation with Germain,' April 7, 1777, Clinton Papers, WLCL, vol. 20, f. 47.
[94] "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 10 July 1779," *Founders Online,* National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-21-02-0343. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 21, *1 June–31 July 1779*, ed. William M. Ferraro. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012, 419–421.]
[95] "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 6–10 August 1779," *Founders Online,* National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-22-02-0044. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 22, *1 August–21 October 1779*, ed. Benjamin L. Huggins. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013, 53–54.]

in stirring up Native American violence, the fact that he was hated on the frontier was something the upper echelons of the Patriot leadership wished to factor into their decision making. In Washington's view leaving Hamilton in severe custody was acceptable provided the duplicity and cruelty the Patriots accused him of could be made public knowledge.

Other realities also drove Washington's thinking – on 29 August he received a letter from British General Frederick Haldimand that threatened retaliation against Patriot prisoners if Hamilton's situation wasn't ameliorated, and on 13 September he wrote to Jefferson 'respecting the measures which have been taken in the Case of Lieutenant Govener Hamilton and the enemys intentions of retaliation in Consequence. By this your Excellency will be able to Judge how far it may be expedient to relax in the present treatment of Mr Hamilton.'[96] [97] Ultimately, while Hamilton's conditions were improved he continued to be viewed as someone who had 'united the foes of liberty with the enemies of civilisation' and whose close relationships with the Native tribes had subverted his privileges as a gentleman.[98]

Racial antagonisms not only affected relations among Europeans and their descendants, but continued to fuel the cycle of bloodshed between whites and Natives. Such violence often only adopted military aspects as a veneer, and frequently resulted in killings that had little to no relation to the war objectives of either side. Never was this more apparent than with the massacre that occurred at the settlement of Gnadenhutten a little over two years after Hamilton's capture – arguably the most appalling massed killing not only of the frontier war, but of the entire revolutionary conflict.

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[96] "To George Washington from General Frederick Haldimand, 29 August 1779," Founders Online, National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-22-02-0227. [Original source: The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 22, 1 August–21 October 1779, ed. Benjamin L. Huggins. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013, 289–291.]
[97] "From George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, 13 September 1779," *Founders Online,* National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-22-02-0337. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 22, *1 August–21 October 1779*, ed. Benjamin L. Huggins. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013, 413–414.]
[98] Sheehan, "'The Famous Hair Buyer General'" *Indiana Magazine of History*, 2.

The Gnadenhutten Massacre

The Christian Lenape who lived at Gnadenhutten had done their best until 1782 to remain neutral and adhere to the pacifistic beliefs of their Moravian sect. The wider Delaware tribes had found themselves in a fatal position, trapped between the Patriot stronghold at Fort Pitt and Hamilton's operational frontier headquarters at Fort Detroit. In response the Lenape had divided, with some supporting one side or the other while a third faction sought to avoid the conflict altogether.

Attempts at neutrality didn't save the Moravians. The frontier's isolation from the directives of either side's high commands allowed colonial settlers to pursue local vendettas, seize land and indulge racial prejudices. The outbreak of the revolutionary war elsewhere in the colonies simply accentuated the pre-existing pattern on the frontier and provided either a distraction or a sufficient degree of legitimacy for settlers to conduct attacks on Native Americans. By the end of the war 'common settlers had come to reject ineffectual patronage and embrace the power that autonomy and violence conferred in a revolutionary crucible.'[99]

Such attitudes aggravated Continental Army officers and regiments that were deployed to the frontier, who often had little to no direct experience of frontier warfare. Such were the difficulties faced by the Continental Army's Daniel Brodhead, who commanded much of the frontier from Fort Pitt when the Gnadenhutten incident occurred. Despite growing up in a Pennsylvanian settlement that had withstood frequent Native attacks, Brodhead had experienced the war up until 1779 in the settled regions of the colonies, participating in the battle of Long Island and the Philadelphia campaign. He was promoted to commander of the Western Department, and while very active in attacking the settlements of Natives who had aligned themselves with Crown Forces, he took a negative view of the efforts of local militias to

[99] Patrick Griffin, *The American Leviathan: Empire, Nation and the Revolutionary Frontier* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 153.

pursue personal vendettas, particularly when they attacked neutral or even pro-Congress tribes.

It was one such attack that resulted in the massacre at Gnadenhutten. In late 1781 the pacifist Moravian Lenape were forced to relocate by Crown-allied Natives. They returned in February 1782 to harvest crops, but were set upon on March 7 by a force of Patriot militia who accused them of trading with the British. The militiamen held a mock trial and voted to kill the men, women and children they had seized. The Natives were informed of the decision and were allowed the night to prepare. The next day the men were separated from the women and children, and led to two separate houses. Inside the militia proceeded to murder the captives. In all nearly 100 people, including over thirty children, were killed and scalped.[100] The only survivors were two children, one of whom escaped and lived despite having also been scalped.

In his detailed study of the massacre, Rob Harper contextualises the militia's violence around societal pressure and struggles for personal status rather than a basic, ill-defined concept of "Indian hating." Previously the killings had been interpreted as the inevitable product of long-running frontier enmity between white settlers and Natives. Harper argues that, as with all massacres, the militiamen involved had motives beyond simple-minded animosity, and casting it as base hatred devalues both the importance of the event and at least some of the autonomy of its perpetrators. He attempts to 'extend the study of anti-Indian violence beyond the motives of perpetrators and a generalized notion of "Indian hating."'[101] In doing so he shows that the leader of the Washington County militia was 'encouraging aggression against Indians… reasserted his authority as commander while diverting settler hostility away from himself and the government he served' while the actual

[100] Rob Harper, 'Looking the Other Way: The Gnadenhutten Massacre and the Contextual Interpretation of Violence' in *The William and Mary Quarterly Third Series, Vol. 64, No. 3, July,* ed. Christopher Grasso (Williamsburg, VA: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2007), 621.
[101] Rob Harper, 'Looking the Other War: The Gnadenhutten Massacre and the Contextual Interpretation of Violence' in *Theatres of Violence: Massacres, Mass Killing and Atrocity Throughout History*, eds. Philip G. Dwyer and Lyndall Ryan (Berghahn Books: New York, 2012), 90.

militia officer leading the expedition feared his position was so tenuous that he left the Natives' fate open to a vote among his men. In all the frontier militia's 'bullying approach to local democracy' worked to give those with a desire for violence the means to inflict it without social censure. [102] [103]

The blanket idea of Gnadenhutten as aggression without intentions also overlooks the possibility that a majority of the militia didn't actually want to be involved in the massacre.[104] Some left rather than follow through with it, and one told of a 'Nathan Rollins & brother [who] had had a father & uncle killed took the lead in murdering the Indians, ...Nathan Rollins had tomahawked nineteen of the poor Moravians, & after it was over he sat down & cried, & said it was no satisfaction for the loss of his father & uncle after all.'[105]

Regardless of how numerous the perpetrators were, the lack of anonymity in the ballot held to decide what to do with the Moravians meant that 'the region's intolerant, bullying political culture surely discouraged them from speaking out.'[106] Because of this 'a relatively small pro-massacre faction prevailed not because of the popularity of their proposal but because those who could have stopped them chose to look the other way.'[107] In short, the nature of the militia's organisation on the frontier helped remove the social barriers that otherwise might have inhibited massacre, and ensured that incidents like Gnadenhutten became a likely consequence of frontier fighting, rather than the shocking irregularities they should have been.

There were no tangible military objectives behind the Gnadenhutten killings. The massacre acted as a pressure valve that eased personal tensions within the settler community involved in them. Race combined with the personal

[102] Ibid, 83.
[103] Ibid, 86.
[104] Ibid, 84.
[105] Joseph Holmes, 'From Col. Joseph Holmes, born near Shepherdstown, Berkley Co. Va., January 27th 1771' in *The American Family of Rev. Obadiah Holmes*, ed. James T. Holmes (Columbus, OH: 1915), 199.
[106] Harper, 'Looking the Other War: The Gnadenhutten Massacre and the Contextual Interpretation of Violence' in *Theatres of Violence: Massacres, Mass Killing and Atrocity Throughout History*, 86.
[107] Ibid, 87.

difficulties being experienced by frontier leaders to subverted rational military activities in favour of feeding the cycle of violence that, without the racial component, might have been more easily broken or moderated, as it had been in the east by Henry Clinton in 1779. More clearly than any massacre in the settled parts of the colonies at least until 1780, events like Gnadenhutten exemplified Leveine's hypothesis that 'massacre is a function of grass-roots fears, anxieties or even violent impulses which find their focus.' [108] Wherever Native Americans were involved in the war, moderation was almost always overtaken by those more violent desires because, simply put, 'once Native Americans and whites came into conflict along the frontier, political considerations took second place to racial enmity.'[109] In the east until 1780 massacre made for an exception that often received censure. In the west it was overlooked as an activity that enabled the more aggressive members of frontier militias and local commanders to exercise their authority.

Gnadenhutten received little in the way of censure among whites in the immediate aftermath of the killings. Though 'some people on the eastern seaboard were appalled by the massacre' – including Benjamin Franklin, who wrote of his 'infinite Pain and Vexation' on the matter whilst still laying the blame upon 'a single Man in England, who happens to love Blood, and to hate Americans' – those living on the frontier were generally altogether more comfortable when it came to the perpetration of massacres.[110][111] Indeed, in the sparse frontier communities that lived around the Sandusky region 'the murders were generally and popularly approved of.'[112] Almost all newspaper reports on Gnaddenhutten 'imparted no moral judgement on the attackers whatsoever… like the murder of Cornstalk and other Indian allies throughout

[108] Levene, 'Introduction' in *The Massacre in History*, 13.
[109] Cogliano, 'The Sixty Years War' in *Early Modern Military History*, 167.
[110] Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 278.
[111] "From Benjamin Franklin to James Hutton, 7 July 1782," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed April 11, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-37-02-0377. [Original source: *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin,* vol. 37, *March 16 through August 15, 1782*, ed. Ellen R. Cohn. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 586–588.]
[112] William Christie Macleod, *The American Indian Frontier* (New York: Routledge, 1928), 416.

the war, the din of reports in favour of taking swift action against British-allied Indians drowned out protests of Gnadenhutten.'[113] Massacres like Gnadenhutten emphasised the active steps some Patriots took in ensuring the atrocity narrative as only a one way story, as they 'condemned atrocities by the British and their Indian allies while turning blind eyes and deaf ears to any rumours of those committed by their own side.'[114]

Conversely, for many Natives Gnadenhutten became a rallying cry in the same way that the Patriots had harnessed Cherry Valley. Parkinson writes that 'blood continued to spill long after Cornwallis's surrender. Gnadenhutten was primarily the reason why. Ohio Indians were furious at what had happened.'[115] The last years of the revolution saw a resurgence in Native military activities, and 'atrocities, frequent before the Gnadenhutten massacre, became commonplace thereafter.'[116] As well as acting as a clear motivating factor among Native efforts to oppose the rebel colonists, 'the massacre of Christian Indians in Ohio in 1782 made cumulative the feeling of the Delawares and Shawnese and other north-western Indians that Christianity was to be distrusted.'[117] The slaughter of the Moravians had 'triggered an Indian revival, not only of the nativistic argument but also of that practice that had been suppressed by cooperation with the British: the ritual torture of prisoners.[118] Those believed to have been involved in 'the Moravian Indian holocaust' were tortured and killed out of hand, often to the dismay of the British. Like other massacres further east, the killings at Gnadenhutten precipitated an onslaught of even greater bloodshed.[119]

Torture and the Consequences of Massacre

[113] Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 537 – 538..
[114] Nester, *The Frontier War*, 1.
[115] Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 544 - 545.
[116] John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607 – 1814* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 161.
[117] Macleod, *The American Indian Frontier*, 516.
[118] Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance,* 87.
[119] Nester, *The Frontier War*, 323.

Settlers came to know 1782 as the bloody year. A retaliatory wave of violence unleashed by Gnadenhutten swept across the frontier, resulting in a spate of engagements and killings that was totally out of step with the de-escalation of military operations occurring further east. One of the most prominent victims of the post-Gnadenhutten fervour was the Continental Army's Colonel William Crawford. In 1782 Crawford, a wealthy and prominent Virginian, was persuaded to come out of retirement to lead a Patriot expedition into the Ohio country, specifically to force Native tribes such as the Wyandott away from the banks of the Sandusky river. The members of the expedition made no secret of their violent intentions towards the Natives, claiming they would completely exterminate the Wyandott.[120]

Aware of Crawford's plans, a joint force of Natives and British rangers met the Patriots on the Sandusky Plains. Held at bay and then surrounded, the rebel militia attempted to break out as darkness fell on 5 June. The militia's discipline collapsed and 'an "every man for himself" mentality seized the fleeing frontiersmen. Individual survival depended on getting ahead of others. Wounded compatriots, neighbours, and even friends were abandoned to distract the savages.'[121]

Here then was the unravelling of the bullying, might-makes-right attitude explored by Harper's study of the militia at Gnadenhutten. In the chaos Crawford himself, along with dozens of others, were captured. He and a number of the prisoners were taken to a Delaware village. A friend of Crawford's wrote that memories of the Gnadenhutten massacre were the direct cause for his treatment – 'it was said the Moravian Indians suffered greatly & which was supposed to have been the cause inflicted on him at the time of his death.'[122] After his involvement in atrocities committed against the tribes had been described, Crawford was tortured – shot with blank rounds, his ears sliced off, and then had burning pieces of wood applied 'to his naked

[120] Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 88.
[121] Nester, *The Frontier War*, 325.
[122] John Irwin, 'Bounty Land Warrant of William Crawford BLWt921-500 VA' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 11/05/2018.

body, already burned black with the powder.' He was forced to walk over burning coals, scalped, and 'continued in all the extremities of pain for an hour and three quarters, or two hours longer, as near as I can judge.' Eventually he died and was cremated. His fate was related by a fellow captive who managed to escape before his own execution. Other prisoners were also killed and their decapitated remains staked around the Shawnee town of Wapatomica.[123]

Crawford's fate resonated beyond the minor impact it had on the course of the war, and the story of his death became inflated by colonial outrage. A ballad entitled *Crawford's Defeat* was written not long after the war. Though the lyrics varied depending on the version being performed, none held back on the details of torture, and most ended with declarations such as 'let everyone rise to revenge Crawford's blood; And likewise the blood of those men of renown, That were taken and burnt at the Sundusky towns.' Its appearance in print in 1791 gives an indication of its uses, for it was published alongside another ballad – *Saint Clair's Defeat: A New Song*. The subject of this latter tale was the destruction of a US Army expedition under General Arthur St. Clair by Natives during the Northwest Indian War, an event decried as a massacre and one which shocked the American public. The transference of the story of Crawford's defeat from a frontier piece to a nationwide audience was because even years later it could still be used as 'a piece of anti-British, anti-Indian propaganda' at a time when it had once more become highly relevant. The 1791 story of Crawford's death served the exact same purpose it had during the revolution, harnessing the anger settlers felt at perceived Native barbarism and keeping the racial flame hotly burning.[124]

Indeed, the popularity of the subject of British-sponsored massacres by Native Americans remained high for decades after the end of the Revolutionary War. Purcell has written of how 'memories of Revolutionary

[123] John Knight, 'That is your Great Captain' in *Captured by the Indians: 15 Firsthand Accounts, 1750 – 1870*, ed. Frederick Drimmer (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1985), 126 – 127.
[124] Parker B. Brown, '"Crawford's Defeat": A Ballad' in *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* (Pittsburgh, PA: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1981), 315.

War Indian-fighting… played a significant role in legitimizing aggression against the Shawnee and other native peoples throughout the 1780.'[125] The outbreak of the War of 1812 in particular saw a new wave of aggression towards Native tribes. With Natives and redcoats once more fighting side-by-side against Americans, stories such as the 1813 report that 'accused British military officers of being responsible for the massacres of American prisoners of war by Native Americans' were very much in vogue – both Federalists and Republicans united to have 5,000 copies of the report printed.[126] Even more relevant were the direct comparisons made with massacres perpetrated during the Revolutionary War. The New York newspaper the *Ontario Messenger*, for example, printed an article entitled 'British Massacres' that provided 'documentary evidence relative to the Anglo-Indian massacres in the war of the revolution.'[127] It is interesting to note that the massacres in question are from a hoax article written by Benjamin Franklin in 1782 and not properly identified as a complete forgery until 1854.[128] Memories of the revolution's massacres, especially its so-called Indian massacres helped to 'generate support for the war and encourage Federalists to renounce their Anglophilia.'[129]

British officials understood the dangers involved in being aligned with Native tribes during the Revolutionary War, especially as the conflict worsened. Despite insincere efforts by some British Indian Department officers to discourage the killing of prisoners, the practice of ritualised torture followed by executions was firmly established among a number of tribes in the months after Gnadenhutten. Hamilton's successor at Detroit, Arent De Peyster, encouraged white officers serving with the Natives to 'endeavour to convince those Nations that by persisting in acts of retaliation they will in the end draw

[125] Purcell, *Sealed with Blood*, 78.
[126] Jasper M. Trautsch, *The Genesis of America: US Foreign Policy and the Formation of National Identity, 1793 – 1815* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 235 – 236.
[127] Carla Mulford, 'Benjamin Franklin's Savage Eloquence: Hoaxes from the Press at Passy, 1782' in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 152, No. 4, (December 2008), 528.
[128] Ibid, 525.
[129] Trautsch, *The Genesis of America*, 233.

mischief upon themselves and upon their posterity… but if they make war agreeable to the example set them by their father and brothers the English they will always find themselves supported against their enemy.'[130] Fears about massacres being committed by their allies further hampered British relations with the Natives as the war progressed. The Governor of East Florida, Patrick Tonyn, exemplified this when he complained to Howe about Native raids and demanded that larger contingents of rangers be deployed alongside them, stating that 'I could hardly have employed the Indians to lay waste Georgia, butchering indiscriminately men, women and children, which would have been the case had they acted by themselves.'[131] This was from a British official who tended to enjoy a more positive relationship with the local tribes than most. Echoing similar difficulties, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the British in Nova Scotia, Michael Franklin, worried in 1780 that tribes would defect without more financial backing, claiming that he had been paying for tributes out of his own pocket but could no longer continue because he would 'risk the ruin of my family.'[132]

British officials went so far as to threaten the complete withdrawal of all military assistance should the executions that followed Gnadenhutten continue. De Peyster attempted to explain why killing captives not only roused the frontiersmen against the Crown but also denied him potentially valuable intelligence; 'I am pleased when I see what you call live meat, because I can speak to it, and get information. Scalps serve to show that you have seen the enemy; but they are of no use to me. I cannot speak with them.'[133] His entreaties were unsuccessful; the torture of prisoners, aimed primarily at those believed to have committed atrocities against Native peoples, 'would persist throughout the 1780s and into the early 1790s.'[134] By

[130] Arent De Peyster, 'Detroit, nineteenth August., 1782' in *Miscellanies by an Officer*, ed. J. Watts de Peyster (Dumfries: C. Munro, 1813) XXXV.
[131] Patrick Tonyn, 'Governor Tonyn to General Sir William Howe, 24 February 1778,' *Guy Carleton, First Baron Dorchester: Papers*. PRO 30/55/8 962 (4), The National Archives, Kew.
[132] Michael Franklin, 'Franklin to Clinton, Windsor, Nova Scotia,' *Guy Carleton, First Baron Dorchester: Papers*. PRO 30/55/25 2973 (1), The National Archives, Kew.
[133] Arent De Peyster, 'Detroit, 12th August., 1781' in *Frontier Retreat on the Upper Ohio, 1779-1781*, ed. Louise Phelps Kellogg (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield, 1917), 376.
[134] Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 88.

1782 the support the Crown could offer its Native allies on the frontier was negligible anyway.[135] Britain's inability to truly mitigate frontier violence had diluted its efforts and turned many settler communities against the Crown, regardless of the retaliation of the militias. For some, massacre was already a way of life, ingrained in cultural memory.

The very separate nature of the war and the powerful legacy of massacres in the west was further emphasised by the ongoing Native campaigning in the closing years of the war. While Yorktown crushed the efforts of Britain's regulars in North America, loose confederations of northern and southern tribes struck with renewed vigour. The largely successful efforts to unite Native peoples against the rebelling colonies meant that the western theatre remained insulated from reversals elsewhere, and 'from the final years of the Revolution through the critical engagements of 1794, the Indians of the north-west trained their guns with more consistency, more unity, and more consequence than did any other Indians in the history of the United States.'[136] In doing so they also 'settled old scores with appalling efficiency.'[137] The successes in the latter years of the war were met with approval by the British, and with Crown commanders in Quebec and Detroit urging more raids – 'ranger units stayed in the field, along with young Delawares, Shawnees, Iroquis, and Cherokees, blanketing the frontier.'[138] In 1780 the destruction of so many settlements in the north-west became known as the burning of the valleys, while in November 1781 a force of Loyalists and Natives lead by Loyalist Captain William Bates – known to his enemies as Bloody Bates – attacked Patriots at Gowan's Fort, sometimes called Thompson's Fort or Thompson's Plantation. After the defenders had surrendered, the Crown soldiers 'killed and horribly mutilated almost every man, woman, or child who had taken refuge within the stockade.'[139] A British

[135] Larry L. Nelson, *A Man of Distinction Among Them*, (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2000), 126 – 127.
[136] Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, 59 - 60.
[137] Griffin, *The American Leviathan*, 159.
[138] Ibid, 158.
[139] Henry Lumpkin, *From Savannah to Yorktown: The American Revolution in the South* (Lincoln, NE: toExcel Press, 1987), 26.

strike in Kentucky further devastated the fledgling settlements there. In 1780 it had been reported that a thousand families inhabited the new territory, but within a few years the number of people still living in Kentucky could be numbered in the few hundreds.[140]

In November 1781 – after Yorktown – the Hurons and the Shawness were pleading with British commanders to provide them with troops and cannons for an ambitious attack on Fort Pitt, hoping to take the Patriot frontier fastness and 'bury the bones of their friends that lay in piles around it.'[141] Brant also attempted to continue the war after the Treaty of Paris was announced, but eventually ceased when the British stopped supplying him. Similarly, Frederick Haldimand, the British governor of Quebec, wrote as late as February 1783 of:

> a speech and determination from the Six Nations Indians, so strongly expressive of their resentment of, and determination to retaliate the late barbarity committed by the Virginians, in the total destruction of a Shawnee settlement (Standing Stone village) and the indiscriminate massacres of all its inhabitants, that I think it my duty to the king's service to communicate their resolutions to you, for the purpose of representing to General Washington the fatal consequences which must unavoidably follow the unwarranted advantage which has been taken of my restraining the light troops and Indians.[142]

Haldimand also complained that he could not 'passively look on and see their [the Iroquois] country ravaged, their women and children murdered for their attachment to the royal cause.'[143] Another British officer, Allan McLean, posted at Niagara, commented on the difficulty of curtailing a fresh wave of violence among the local tribes, and his fears that the Patriots would take advantage of his restraint the way Haldimand claimed they had done.[144]

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[140] Volo and Volo, *Family Life*, 343.
[141] Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 166.
[142] Frederick Haldimand, 'Haldimand to Guy Carleton, Quebec, 17 February 1783,' *Guy Carleton, First Baron Dorchester: Papers*. PRO 30/55/62 6920 (1), The National Archives, Kew.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 278.

So the bloodshed continued. At Blue Licks on August 19 1782, a Crown Forces raiding party routed the Kentucky militia. The Patriots called the battle a massacre. In retaliation George Rogers Clark had five Shawnee villages burned, while four years later a Shawnee chief, who hadn't been present at the battle, was publicly murdered for 'Blue Licks.' The cycle of violence went on.[145]

The fighting on the western frontier following Gnadenhutten showed that 'the Indians of the Old Northwest held the initiative in 1782.'[146] This was mirrored across the west. In the north the Iroquois had largely recovered from Sullivan's campaign, while in the south the Chickamauga had broken with the wider Cherokee in order to continue the struggle with the colonists. While the British had failed to translate this broad reversal of fortunes to the wider war, it had left their Native allies in a position to continue to campaign indefinitely.

And campaign they did, if the intensive violence up and down the frontier in the decade following the end of the revolution was anything to go by. Besides the more formal conflicts between the United States and the Indian nations, between 1783 and 1795 around 1,500 settlers were killed, wounded or seized in raids and retaliations. 'Seldom did a week pass without some account of horror in the West' being reprinted in the colonial press.[147] From the butchering of the Russ family to the massacre of a dozen settlers at Big Bottom, Ohio, and the murder of Cherokee chieftains at Chilhowee in retaliation for the killing of the Kirk family, the 1780s and early 1790s saw little if any notable decrease in violence on the frontier. Nor did the spatial distance insulate the wider United States from what was happening on its borders – 'massacres were widely reported in the East to the goriest detail,' and the fully-fledge military campaigns of Harmer in 1790, Saint Claire in 1791 and Wayne in 1793 kept the bloody state of the frontier firmly in the public consciousness.[148]

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[145] Lofaro, *Daniel Boone,* 138 – 139.
[146] Tyro, 'Ambivalent allies' in *Strategy in the American War of Independence*, 132.
[147] Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 94.
[148] Ibid.

On the frontier, more so than anywhere else, massacre was commonplace. The fighting was characterised throughout 'by brutality and atrocity on both sides… quarter was rarely given.'[149] Where the killing of surrendering soldiers or the torture of prisoners generated angry letters and outraged newspaper articles, pamphlets, broadsides and declarations in the east, in the west the cold-blooded murder of women and children almost seemed to have an air of inevitability about it. Massacres like Gnadenhutten, while meeting a degree of negative commentary, ultimately could not avoid 'the force of communal values endorsing these events.'[150] Even at the start of the revolution, such atrocities were a given in a place where violence played a central role in lives that were too physically removed from the law and order of the interior.

It is with good reason that North America's Native population have often been described as the biggest losers of the Revolutionary War. Those Natives on the defeated side would be left entirely exposed to the retribution of the victors, while those who backed the winner had little hope of seeing the terms of their alliance honoured. Remaining neutral was an impossibility given the scale of the conflict, and incidents like Gnadenhutten showed that refusing to take sides simply made Native American tribes more vulnerable. The Indian wars that followed immediately on from the revolution further cemented the idea that Natives Americans were forever the natural enemy of the newly-formed United States. In the Revolutionary War's fledgling historiography Britain's use of Natives was a tangible example of their betrayal of the colonies. The savage aspects of the frontier conflict were laid eternally at the feet of the British government, and in the consciousness of the new United States the triumph of the Patriots became the invented triumph of decency and civilisation over the state-sponsored massacres espoused by King George.

[149] Cogliano, 'The Sixty Years War' in *Early Modern Military History*, 170.
[150] Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion*, 77.

This fitted with the wider narrative that came with the conflict's sanitisation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his book on the crisis the Revolutionary War created among Native communities, Colin G. Calloway noted that:

> In the emerging national memory of the Revolution, responsibility for the brutality and destruction of the Revolutionary War on the frontier lay squarely on the shoulders of the Indians and their British backers… After the war, lurid accounts tended to increase rather than diminish… Stories of Indian atrocities became implanted in the minds of an entire generation.[151]

Stereotyping and invention shaped the nation's ideas regarding its revolutionary birth, and acted as the foundation for part of the war's justification. While many of the other atrocities committed during the war were marginalised by nineteenth century writers in their efforts to create a purer image of the country's contested birth, the massacres committed on the frontier became a key element in validating the American Revolution to later generations.

[151] Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country*, 294.

Chapter Five: Waxhaws and Haw River

> Slaughter was commenced before Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton could remount another horse, the one with which he led his dragoons being overturned by the volley… The loss of officers and men was great on the part of the Americans, owing to the dragoons so effectually breaking the infantry, and to a report amongst the [Loyalist] cavalry, that they had lost their commanding officer, which stimulated the soldiers to a vindictive asperity not easily restrained.[1]

Banastre Tarleton wrote the preceding passage in his 1788 history of the British campaigns in the Carolinas and Virginia. He was describing, in third person, his view of what became perhaps the most infamous massacre in North America since the Boston shootings – the annihilation of a column of Continental Army regulars near the border between North and South Carolina, in the Waxhaws area close to the settlement of Lancaster.

That battle, brief and bloody, would set the tone for renewed British operations in the south between 1780 and 1781. It was the final major phase of the revolutionary war, and one defined, like the opening in 1775, by massacre. It was at this stage that the conflict morphed more clearly into a civil war than at any other point – communities, neighbours and family members turned against one another as the British presence allowed the venting of animosities that often predated the five years of revolutionary struggle. In his memoirs Patriot commander Henry Lee recalled that 'in a civil war no citizen should expect or desire neutrality. Whoever attempts to place himself in that condition misunderstands human nature, and becomes entangled in toils always dangerous – often fatal.'[2] And so it proved for thousands of the inhabitants of the southern colonies – people were murdered in their beds and on their doorsteps, kangaroo courts passed death sentences, houses were burned and property wrecked or stolen on a wider and more sustained level than at any other time in the conflict. Sometimes

[1] Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781, in the Southern Provinces of North America* (Dublin: Colles, Exshaw, White, H. Whitestone, Burton, Byrne, Moore, Jones, and Dornin, 1788), 31 – 32.
[2] Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States, Volume 2* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1812), 254.

the combatants were not even clearly aligned to one side or the other as 'old feuds were settled under the banner of patriotism… British hopes for a peaceful occupation vanished in the smoke of burning barns and houses.'[3]

The chaos that engulfed parts of the Carolinas during this third phase of the conflict was further exacerbated by British officers in the field who appeared to have little regard for the more conciliatory desires of the likes of Cornwallis, Clinton and Germain. Tarleton was only one of 'a set of younger, ruthless British leaders of Loyalist forces in the south who would have a disproportionate impact on the ways the war was fought and perceived.'[4] Men like James Wemyss, Francis Rawdon and Patrick Ferguson, all young and ambitious men, seemed more concerned with punishing the rebels and furthering their own careers in the British Army than they were with bringing the American colonies back into the imperial fold. Tarleton summarised the general attitude of mid-ranking British officers in a letter to Cornwallis in 1780; 'If warfare allows me, I shall give these disturbers of the peace no quarter. If humanity obliges me to spare their lives, I shall convey them close prisoners to Camden. For confiscation must take place in their effects. I must discriminate with severity.'[5] Unfortunately for the royal cause, discriminating with severity did nothing to earn the hearts and minds spoken of by Clinton to Germain, yet officers like Tarleton were the vital players in the southern campaigns of 1780 and 1781. They helped stir up a crescendo of violence that included a spate of massacres that ultimately pushed Cornwallis to his doomed Virginia campaign, and Yorktown.

This chapter is primarily focussed on the massacres at Waxhaws in 1780 and Haw River in 1781. Both events again provide examples of the very tangible military impact of massacres upon the wider war. They also show the divergent effects massacres could have – in the case of Waxhaws, Patriot

[3] John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780 – 1782* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press), 72.
[4] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 309.
[5] Banastre Tarleton, 'Leneu's Ferry, Aug. 5, 1780,' *Charles Cornwallis Papers*. PRO 30/11/63/19-21 The National Archives, Kew.

resistance was bolstered by the outrage generated by the engagement, while Haw River helped to break the morale of Loyalists in North Carolina. Both massacres also act as a starting point for examining the degeneration of British efforts in the south, with an out-of-control cycle of violence ultimately undermining efforts of subdue the rebellion. The nature of the southern colonies as slave-holding societies is also established – similar to the frontier, whites were haunted by the possibility (though rarely realised) of massacre, albeit at the hands of their enslaved peoples rather than Native Americans. Such an environment added a febrile racial dynamic to the large-scale campaigning in the southern colonies in 1780 and 1781.

Slavery and the Southern Spectre of Massacre

By the second half of 1779 it was apparent that the British were losing the war. Defeat at Saratoga and the subsequent French and Spanish entry into the conflict turned what had been a test of British commitment to its imperial experiment in America into a global emergency. The colonial rebellion had survived the tribulations of the years 1776 to 1778 and emerged stronger. Howe's inability to destroy the Continental Army or permanently defeat Washington had lead to his replacement by Sir Henry Clinton. Public support for the war in Britain, often lukewarm at best, was waning rapidly.

The British government, in concert with its high command, decided on one last gamble. Germain and the king both believed that of all the North American colonies south of Quebec, those of Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia and the Floridas were the most disaffected towards Congress. British strategists acted on this belief to formulate what became known as the southern strategy. The plan was ostensibly simple – invade the Carolinas with a body of regulars, raise the royal standard, and then harness the Loyalist population that came forward once their Patriot oppressors had been cowed. Success centred upon the army's 'ability to defeat or contain Whig forces, to give the widest support possible to the counterrevolutionary activities of loyalist forces, and to protect the lives and property of loyal

citizens.'[6] In reality the strategy proved to be highly flawed, and the obstacles to its completion insurmountable. There was no genuine, uniform loyalty amongst most of the southern colonial population, and the Crown Forces sent there became mired in a conflict that their presence only exacerbated.[7]

As their initial target, the British would have struggled to pick a more stratified colony than the South Carolina in 1780. By the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, slavery defined the culture in both the Carolinas and in Virginia. In South Carolina especially the population had been majority enslaved since 1708. During the Revolution it was the only colony where most of the inhabitants were African or of African descent, with the majority of the enslaved population located around the low country and coastal regions. The white population knew that their 'ability to command the labour of their slaves was the essential source of their wealth,' a fact that didn't always appear to be at the forefront of British military planning. [8] Invading South Carolina thus resulted in a conflict that has best been described as 'a complex triangular process involving two sets of white belligerents and at least twenty thousand – probably more – black slaves.'[9]

The fact that British upper echelons didn't seem to properly appreciate this element lead to a failure to consider white attitudes towards the prospect of slave rebellion and insurrection. In the south as a whole during the mid eighteenth century slaves constituted between 40 and 60 percent of the population.[10] Colonists remained in constant fear over the prospect of revolts and the implied threat of massacre. While militias and the bearing of arms had long been associated with colonial antagonism towards Native Americans, in places such as the South Carolina low country the suppression

[6] Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 112.
[7] Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Command during the Revolutionary War and the Preservation of Empire* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013), 260 – 261.
[8] Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740 – 1790* (Ithaka, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 188.
[9] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 108.
[10] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 295.

of uprisings among the slave population was a greater concern than the threat of incursion by tribes such as the Cherokee, and the hunting of runaways a far more common occupation that combat with Natives. Fears about slave rebellion – and the worsening oppression which they helped to create – had been realised in 1739 when a group of African-born slaves gathered near Stono River, South Carolina, broke into a storehouse, seized arms and ammunition and killed two storekeepers. They then marched south, presumably with the objective of reaching the then-Spanish colony in Florida, which offered freedom to escaped slaves in the hope of agitating revolt in the British colonies further north. Along the way they killed several dozen whites and freed more slaves, until eventually they were engaged by the South Carolina militia near the Edisto River. Despite fierce resistance the escapees were defeated and scattered. Most were executed and their body parts put on display, while some were sold back into slavery in the West Indies.[11]

White outrage at such uprisings was universal. An account of the Stono rebellion, written as part of the larger official report on the failed British attack on Saint Augustine, claimed the escaped slaves had 'massacred twenty-three whites after the most cruel and barbarous manner to be conceived.'[12] It also captured the mood of a white planter class terrified at the prospect of the massacres they believed would be unleashed by slave revolts:

> On this occasion every breast was filled with concern. Evil brought home to us, within our very doors, awakened the attention of the most unthinking. Every one that had any relation any tie of nature; every one that had a life to lose, were in the most sensible manner shocked at such danger daily hanging over their heads.[13]

Such panic lead to a worsening of the conditions faced by slaves thanks to the 1740 Negro Act, which among other articles forbade them from assembly, learning to read or growing their own food, and specified that

[11] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 73.
[12] 'Statements made in the Introduction to the Report on General Oglethorpe's Expedition to St. Augustine' in *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, *Volume 2*, ed. Bartholomew Rivers Carroll (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836), 357 – 358.
[13] Ibid, 359.

masters had to ensure a ratio of at least one white to every ten enslaved persons on their plantations. The period just prior to the revolution was even more fraught as far as white Southerners were concerned; Sylvia Frey's studies have found that 'during the two decades beginning in 1765, slave unrest was more intensive and widespread than in any previous period.'[14] The continual fear and occasional bouts of outright panic speak of the particular nature of southern society at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. As should be expected, such a conflict didn't just drastically affect the balance of the slave societies in the south – a great deal of the conflict was in fact fought through the prism of slave-holding concerns themselves, and that included the looming threat of massacre.

This aspect was illustrated by events in November 1775. As Washington tightened the noose around British-held Boston, most Crown authority in the south had been confined to Royal Navy ships in harbours such as Charleston and Yorktown. The Virginia House of Burgesses declared that the royal governor of Virginia, the Earl of Dunmore, had resigned his post due to his flight from Williamsburg to *HMS Fowley*. In response Dunmore issued an incendiary proclamation that, besides announcing martial law and proclaiming all seditionists in the colony traitors to the British Crown, declared 'all indentured servants, Negroes, or others… free that are able and willing to bear arms.'[15] The fact that it was this particular clause which resulted in the most outrage not only in Virginia but throughout the colonies indicates the primacy of slaveholding in southern colonial life and the terror that memories of revolts like Stono River induced – a terror that Dunmore was deliberately attempting to heighten. Dunmore 'seized upon the idea of intimidating independence-minded white southerners with the threat of a slave rising without, however, actually inciting once' – a tightrope he found impossible to walk.[16] Like later British policy makers throughout the war, he proved tone-deaf to majority colonial sentiment and fatally underestimated the Patriot

[14] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 49.
[15] John Murray, *A Proclamation*, accessed Encyclopaedia Virginia, 13/06/2018 https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Lord_Dunmore_s_Proclamation_1775
[16] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 45.

propaganda machine, failing to appreciate that a short-term military gain could have far more debilitating long-term consequences.

In December the Virginia Convention responded to Dunmore, stating that all runaway slaves who did not return to their masters within ten days would be hung, and also seeking to re-establish some sort of moral high ground by criticising Dunmore's hypocrisy in only offering liberty to the slaves of rebelling masters, while he himself owned slaves that would not see freedom under his proclamation. Despite this, within a month hundreds of enslaved people had seized their freedom and made their way to the only two remaining enclaves of royal authority between Virginia and the Floridas – Tybee Island at Savannah and Sullivan's Island outside Charleston. This further outraged whites in the South, most acutely the planter class to whom 'it may have seemed as if the empire had turned upside-down… now the forces of the king seemed a font of lawlessness and anarchy.'[17] In his desperation to avert the loss of control by offering a limited emancipation, Dunmore had hardened the south's most influential and powerful social strata against the British cause.

With the conditions of enslaved peoples playing a prominent role in the escalation to open conflict in the south, it should be no surprise that they were also involved in the first military engagements of the war there. In November 1775 Patriots, disguised as Natives, attacked the fugitive slave camp on Sullivan's island, killing some and recapturing others in an action that would certainly have been decried as a massacre were the roles reversed.[18] Meanwhile at the battle of Great Bridge Crown Forces included Dunmore's newly-raised Ethiopian Regiment, the largest force of escaped slaves to be engaged in combat during the war. Dunmore 'used his black recruits to raid the Virginia coast, and his black soldiers aided hundreds of slaves to escape, sometimes assisting the evacuation of entire plantations.'[19] Fears of massacre by freed slaves and hatred towards the British authorities

[17] Olwell, *Masters, Slaves and Subjects*, 240.
[18] Ibid, 241.
[19] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 257.

responsible for freeing them ran rampant and helped to foment the rapid deterioration into unchecked violence. The Dunmore proclamation had 'united almost all of the shocked whites as Patriots determined to win independence from British rule.'[20]

This was the situation that Crown Forces found themselves thrust into at the start of 1780 when they arrived by ship outside of Charleston. Britain's hypocritical attitudes towards slavery had ended up 'infuriating even Loyalist whites, intensifying white solidarity, and thus contributing to British defeats.'[21] Because of this there was no permanent Crown presence in either the Carolinas or Virginia prior to Clinton's second invasion.

The Waxhaws Massacre

Despite this, the new British campaign was initially effective. Clinton succeeded in 1780 where he had failed in 1776, taking Charleston along with its 5,000-strong Continental Army garrison. This combined with Tarleton's victories over the Patriot militia at Monck's Corner and Lenud's Ferry produced the near-complete destruction of organised Patriot forces in South Carolina. Following Charleston's surrender the only resistance to British occupation was to be found in a Continental Army detachment that had been on its way to reinforce the town, commanded by Colonel Abraham Buford. Learning of Charleston's fall, Buford began to retreat towards North Carolina. Cornwallis, under orders from Clinton, dispatched Tarleton to destroy the column.

Tarleton force-marched his men across 104 miles of rough Carolina countryside in fifty-four hours to catch up with Buford, losing men and horses to fatigue along the way. When he realised he wasn't going to escape, Buford turned at bay in the Waxhaws region, close to the North Carolina border. Tarleton demanded Buford's surrender, which Buford refused. The British

[20] Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772–1832* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2013), 24.
[21] David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150.

then mounted a single charge through the lightly forested terrain. Buford unwisely ordered his men not to fire until the enemy cavalry were as close as ten yards away, a directive that ensured the horsemen of the British Legion and the 17th Light Dragoons reached the enemy almost entirely unscathed. The Patriot line collapsed upon contact, with only the left flank managing to hold out for any length of time.

It would appear that the most important casualty of the single Patriot volley was Tarleton's horse. The British Legion's commander stated that 'slaughter was commenced before Lieutenant-colonel Tarleton could remount another horse, the one with which he had led his dragoons being overturned by the volley.'[22] The claim that he was unhorsed by the Continentals' only volley and thus could not exercise restraint on his men could be taken as a convenient excuse, but does match his predilection for leading from the front. This exemplifies Tarleton's foremost fault as a combat commander, namely his apparent need to become personally engaged in any action he was involved in. Fighting the pro-patriot Stockbridge Natives in August 1778, Simcoe described how Tarleton 'had a narrow escape; in striking at one of the fugitives, he lost his balance and fell from his horse; luckily, the Indian had no bayonet, and his musket had been discharged.'[23] Similarly, at Blackstocks Farm Tarleton finished the battle with his helmet shot away and multiple bullet holes in his coat, and in a skirmish just prior to the battle of Guildford Courthouse he lost two fingers to a Patriot musket ball – Tarleton, answering Colonel Lee's questions about various prisoners he had taken, 'apologized for not writing himself, saying that he had received a ball in his right hand in our morning rencontre,' and wrote to his brother in England saying 'I was shot in ye right hand; half of which has been amputated.' [24] [25] He was

[22] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 31 – 32.
[23] Simcoe, *Simcoe's Military Journal*, 85.
[24] Cecil B. Hartley, *Life of Major General Henry Lee, Commander of Lee's Legion in the Revolutionary War and Subsequent Governor of Virginia* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859), 152 – 153.
[25] Banastre Tarleton, 'North Carolina Apr ye 7 1781' in *The Green Dragoon: the Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson*, ed. Robert D. Bass (Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper Publishing, 1957), 171.

arguable more closely involved in personal combat than any other British officer of equivalent rank throughout the war, but while this certainly created a strong bond with the men of his Legion – who had started 'viewing him as their champion' – it left him unable to do much more than issue the initial order to charge.[26] In smaller engagements like Monck's Corner, Lenud's Ferry and Fisherdam Ford such an order, properly timed, was usually all that was needed, but it left Tarleton ill-suited to any larger command, a fact laid bare at Cowpens.

Fortunately for Tarleton, one charge was enough to break the Continentals at Waxhaws. It was at this point, as the Legion cavalry crashed home, that Buford belatedly decided to send forward a white flag. Accounts fail to agree either who carried it or what their fate was. Buford says only that 'I sent a flag to the commanding officer to offer a surrender which was refused in a very rude manner.'[27] Writing almost forty years after the battle, Buford's adjutant, Henry Bowyer, claimed he'd been the one who carried the flag, and was about to parlay with Tarleton when the British officer's horse was shot. 'The exasperated colonel rose from the ground, and ordered the soldiers to dispatch him. They immediately gathered round, and several cuts were made at him, which he had the good fortune to parry and avoid.' He went on to describe how he made good his escape, assisted by the fire of a nearby platoon of Continentals.[28] Another eyewitness also writing decades after the battle, Patriot surgeon Robert Brownfield, identified another man as bearing the white flag, one Ensign Cruit, who he said 'was instantly cut down,' seemingly in defiance of Buford's claim that the bearer of his white flag returned to him to describe his very rude refusal, and also in spite of the fact

[26] Anthony J. Scotti Jr., *Brutal Virtue: The Myth and Reality of Banastre Tarleton* (Westminster, MA: Heritage Books, 2007), 166.
[27] Abraham Buford, 'Report of Colonel Abraham Buford' in *The Blood be Upon their Head: Tarleton and the Myth of Buford's Massacre*, ed. Jim Piecuch (Lugoff, SC: Woodward Corporation, 2010), 62.
[28] Henry Bowyer, 'Recollection of Major Bowyer' in *The Blood be Upon their Head: Tarleton and the Myth of Buford's Massacre*, ed. Jim Piecuch (Lugoff, SC: Woodward Corporation, 2010), 66.

that the Ensign Cruit – who we know to have been a part of Buford's command – survived the battle.[29]

In the most forensic study of the battle to date, Jim Piecuch argues that Buford probably did send forward a subordinate with a flag seeking terms, but that the bearer was unable to find Tarleton, who had been unhorsed at the beginning of the battle, and was quite possibly turned away by subordinate Legion officers who didn't have the authority to accept a surrender.[30] Regardless of the confusion surrounding the flag's particulars, two points that would have an important bearing on what happened next remain clear – that Tarleton had been shot from his horse and was not in a position to exercise any sort of authority, and that in the scattered, confused fighting in woodland terrain, some elements of both sides were aware that the Continentals were formally surrendering, while others were not. Indeed the Moravians living in nearby Salem left behind a record of Patriot soldiers at the battle fighting on despite the surrender, an account that has been wholly overlooked by studies of the battle until now. Johann Michael Graff wrote in his diary that Patriot fugitives from the battle, passing through Salem, described how 'they had been surrounded by the English, and laid down their arms, but as the English commander rode up one man seized a gun and shot at him, and then the massacre began.'[31] This fresh description from a neutral source adds credence to the belief that not all Patriots genuinely surrendered when they had the opportunity.

The recipe for bloodshed was clear, and numerous later Patriot sources testify towards a massacre. Bowyer writes that 'a dreadful massacre of the detachment followed.'[32] Brownfield describes:

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[29] Robert Brownfield, 'Recollection of Dr. Robert Brownfield' in *The Blood be Upon their Head: Tarleton and the Myth of Buford's Massacre*, ed. Jim Piecuch (Lugoff, SC: Woodward Corporation, 2010), 68.
[30] Jim Piecuch, *The Blood be Upon their Head: Tarleton and the Myth of Buford's Massacre* (Lugoff, SC: Woodward Corporation, 2010), 25.
[31] Johann Michael Graff, 'June 8' in *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina, Vol IV, 1780-1783*, Adelaide L. Fries, ed. (Raleigh NC: Edwards & Broughton Print. Co, 1930), 1544.
[32] Bowyer, 'Recollection of Major Bowyer' in *The Blood be Upon their Head*, 66.

> A scene of indiscriminate carnage never surpassed by the ruthless atrocities of the most barbarous savages. The demand for quarters, seldom refused to a vanquished foe, was at once found to be in vain; – not a man was spared… they went over the ground plunging their bayonets into every one that exhibited any signs of life, and in some instances, where several had fallen one over the other, these monsters were seen to throw off on the point of the bayonet the uppermost, to come at those beneath.[33]

While Bowyer and Brownfield were both writing many decades after the event and with full knowledge of the place the battle came to occupy in the pantheon of Revolutionary War massacres, Buford himself also related murderous intent among the victors in a report written just days after the battle, claiming 'two third of the officers and soldiers that were form'd in battalion killed and wounded many of which were killed after they had lain down their arms.'[34]

It is difficult to be certain of this statement's accuracy given that we know Buford fled rapidly after the start of the battle, but a large number of pension claims by Patriot participants in the action do show a high number of grievous wounds. One reported 'a bayonet ran in his breast, and his arm and head severely wounded by the sword,' another 'four wounds, one by a bayonet through his arm one in his head and right wrist both by a sword,' while another 'had been wounded in nine different places.' [35] [36] [37] There are dozens of similar statements, many describing wounds that indicate the bloody work of the sword and the bayonet and which are reminiscent of the depositions collected after the Tappan massacre. While this alone is not an indication of a massacre – we have already seen Patriot aversion to the

[33] Brownfield, 'Recollection of Dr. Robert Brownfield' in *The Blood be Upon their Head*, 68 – 69.
[34] Buford, 'Report of Colonel Abraham Buford' in *The Blood be Upon their Head*, 62 – 63.
[35] William Jewell, 'Pension Application of William Jewell W11946 f116VA 12/27/13' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 21/02/2018.
[36] Richard Cains, 'Pension Application of Richard Cains S35822' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 21/02/2018.
[37] John Felkins, 'Pension Application of John Felkins S39517 f18VA 1/14/15' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 21/02/2018.

bayonet, and willingness to demonise its use in the same way that British commentators sometimes bemoaned the rifle – it does provide further evidence that, for so short an engagement, between such relatively few combatants, the human cost in dead and wounded was shockingly high. Of the 420 members of Buford's column that were engaged 113 were killed and 150 wounded, a casualty ratio of over 60%, well in excess of most other engagements during the war. [38] In the absence of much contemporary commentary, such figures are damning. In short, 'were it not for the tell-tale casualty ratio one might be inclined to view American propaganda about this episode in the same light as Paoli and Tappan.'[39]

Piecuch argues that there were almost no Patriot sources specifically calling the battle a massacre in its immediate aftermath of the battle, citing a number of writers who had heard rumours of the engagement but said nothing regarding stories of undue bloodshed. Identifying that 'the "massacre" question is at the heart of our understanding of Waxhaws,' he cites two key reasons for describing it as such, reasons that could be applied to many cases of bloodshed throughout the war; firstly, that the battle 'served as a cautionary tale of British ruthlessness and perfidy that could keep the wavering in the Revolutionary camp,' and secondly, that it 'provided a defence for Americans who carried out their own acts of wanton brutality and violent terror.' [40] [41]

Other authors have also hit out against the claims of massacre, despite the high Patriot casualties. In his encyclopaedia of the American Revolution, Mark M. Boatner III wrote that 'the propaganda-inspired uproar about a "massacre" has obscured the brilliance of Tarleton's pursuit and attack… even allowing for poor discipline and low morale, Buford should have been

[38] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 86.
[39] Hugh Bicheno, *Rebels and Redcoats: The American Revolutionary War* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 176.
[40] Piecuch, *The Blood be Upon their Head*, 27.
[41] Ibid, 37.

able to fight off a tired enemy he outnumbered two to one.'[42] John S. Pancake, in his history of the war in the Carolinas, wrote that 'reports that Tarleton's men bayoneted the wounded are hardly consistent with the fact that the British paroled the wounded… the Patriots were naturally anxious to overlook the fact that the British, bone-weary from their forced march, had defeated a force that outnumbered them three to two.'[43] Hoock, meanwhile, writes that 'while the encounter was perhaps not the atrocity of historical legend, Patriots quickly dubbed it Buford's Massacre. Their new battle cry… helped them explain, if not justify, future atrocities as revenge.'[44]

While there are champions of Tarleton and his Legion in relatively recent historiography, conducting a forensic discussion of whether Waxhaws was or wasn't a massacre perhaps runs the risk of missing the wider, more salient point backed up by authors such as Hoock or John Buchanan, who wrote that 'whatever specifically happened at the Waxhaws on that tragic day of 29 May 1780 is eclipsed by the perception of the Rebels far and wide that indeed a massacre of helpless men had occurred.'[45] Patriot sources soon began using accounts of the battle as a rallying cry, and in doing so won a propaganda victory that could be described as definitive for the war in the south. Much like Boston in 1770, the value of stories of the massacre of Buford's column outweighed the material impact of the event itself. In this case, the tale of John McClure is instructive. A young militiaman who was in the process of disbanding following the fall of Charleston, he called in with some friends at the house of one John Gaston, where:

> He and his friends received intelligence of the shocking massacre of Colonel Bradford's [Buford's] men, by Tarleton, two days previous… on the reception of this news, he (Captain McClure), and three of said Gaston's sons, and Captain John Steek, I think, arose upon their feet and made this united and

[42] Mark M. Boatner III, *Encyclopaedia of the American Revolution* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), p 1175.
[43] John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780 - 1782* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 71.
[44] Hoock, *Scars of Independence,* 312.
[45] John Buchanan, *The Road To Charleston: Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution* (Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2019), 23.

> solemn declaration: “that they would never submit not surrender to the enemies of their country; that Liberty or death, from that time forth, should be their motto!”[46]

In his *History of the United States of America*, Bancroft claims that the Patriots ‘making no resistance, sued for quarter. None was granted… the tidings of this massacre carried through the southern forests mingled horror and anger.’[47] While Bancroft’s account is an inaccurate repeat of older Patriot myths of the battle, his emphasis on the propaganda effect involved in the concept of massacre is key. More modern studies of the campaigns in the south have acknowledged Waxhaws as a decisive moment during Britain’s southern strategy, one that initially escaped British commanders:

> Accounts of the Waxhaws Massacre reverberated through the backcountry with talk of “Bloody Ban” Tarleton and British barbarism. In terms of strategic communications and the loss of the “hearts and minds” of the populace, the Waxhaws affair’s ramifications had not been recognized by Crown authorities.[48]

It wasn’t long before Patriots in the south coined the phrases Tarleton’s quarter and Buford’s play to invoke the killing of prisoners and a desire for vengeance, mirroring the Paoli’s quarter and remember Paoli cries that had precipitated Patriot attacks at Germantown and Stony Point, or the shout of Cherry Valley quarter that preceded Walter Butler’s death. The Whig press also took up the cry with its usual alacrity. In July 1780 the *Maryland Journal, and Baltimore Advertiser* published what it claimed to be an account of a Continental Captain, Adam Wallace, who was killed after his surrender. The British and Loyalists ensured that ‘instead of meeting with that reception which the feelings of humanity dictates, or that clemency which our conquered foes have ever received at our hands, no quarters were given.’[49] Within a few months Waxhaws ‘became symbolic of British barbarity’ and the

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[46] Joseph Gaston, ‘A Reminiscence of the War of the Revolution, in South Carolina’ in *The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries, Volume II, Third Series* (Morrisania, NY: Henry B. Dawson, 1873), 90.
[47] George Bancroft, *Bancroft’s History of the United States of America, Centenary Edition, Volume 6* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1876), 286.
[48] Carpenter, *Southern Gambit*, 94.
[49] William Goddard, and James Angell, *The Maryland journal, and the Baltimore advertiser* [Baltimore Md.: William Goddard, to 1794]. July 18, 1780.

battle, along with ‘the depredations committed by British regulars and loyalist militia units’ fully harnessed the violence ‘that had been bred by years of Indian wars and one year of bitter partisan fighting.’ [50] [51] Yet again, a specific act of massacre – appearing on paper as nothing more than a minor military operation cementing British control of South Carolina – would motivate combatants, provide justification for future acts of violence and act as a major contributing factor in the near-total degeneration of Britain’s southern strategy.

The Cycle of Violence

British hopes that retaking much of the South Carolina low country would curb the local Patriots were not to be realised. Instead, following word of Waxhaws, fighting flared between Patriot militia and their emboldened Loyalist enemies. Barely a month and a half after the fall of Charleston there had already been ‘fifteen clashes between Tories and Whigs involving forces ranging from thirty to forty on each side to over a thousand.’[52] The arrival of British regulars, rather than galvanise a loyal populace, simply created an opportunity for peoples who had been enemies for years to legitimise their violence against one another. ‘Old animosities from the days of the Regulator Movement often fuelled intense fighting,’ while an earlier, abortive Loyalist rising in 1776 had also left many neighbours with grudges to settle. As the author of a later biography of Continental Army general Nathanael Greene put it, ‘there was hardly a plantation which had not been the scene of some bitter conflict or brutal massacre; hardly a family that had not been the victim of some barbarous outrage.’[53]

The looming spectre of slavery in the south also fed the rapid deterioration of order in the Carolinas. Regardless of the British leadership’s ambivalence and hypocrisy towards the struggles of enslaved peoples, not to mention the

[50] Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 71.
[51] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 113.
[52] Ibid.
[53] George Washington Greene, *The Life of Nathanael Greene, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution*, Volume 3, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), 326 – 327.

disgust of wealthier Loyalists, the partisans supporting the royalist cause also seem to have had few reservations about fighting alongside black escapees. While no black regiments were recruited by Patriot forces in the South, inhabitants complained of the racially mixed troops of banditti and raiders who harried those with Patriot sentiments.[54] The situation was little different in the north, with escaped slaves such as 'Colonel' Cornelius Tye even commanding partisan groups with dispensation from British officers.[55] The nature of this triangular conflict meant that 'backcountry people chose sides based as much on their economic interests as their ideological positions' and bands of militiamen on both sides could at times barely be differentiated from groups of outlaws or bands of vengeance-bent vigilantes.[56] Such men included the likes of Colonel Hugh Ervin, formerly of Marion's partisans, who deserted in order pursue a career of home burning, and Whig partisan Maurice Murphy, who 'became a virtual outlaw' before shooting his own uncle when he denounced him.[57] On the opposite side, if in name only, were the likes of Samuel Brown, who quickly became known as 'Plundering Sam' following half-hearted declarations of allegiance to King George and a massed looting of Laurens County, that eventually saw him shot and killed by a local resident.[58] Similar was Colonel Daniel McGirth, a Georgia Loyalist whose men went on a murderous plundering spree in South Carolina, 'killing every man he met who had not sworn allegiance to the King.'[59] McGirth's depredations were so indiscriminatory that the British governor of Georgia, James Wright, was eventually sent a petition by concerned citizens which

[54] Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776 – 1848* (London: Verso, 1988), 115.
[55] Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 141 – 144.
[56] Melissa Walker, *The Battles of Kings Mountain and Cowpens: The American Revolution in the Southern Backcountry* (New YorkL Routledge, 2013), 60.
[57] Ibid, 87.
[58] Pancake, *This Destructive War*, 85.
[59] Tarleton Brown, *Memoirs of Tarleton Brown, a Captain of the Revolutionary War*, ed. Charles I. Bushnell (New York: Privately Printed, 1862), 31.

noted the outlaw's 'robbing, murdering and distressing.' He subsequently put a bounty of fifty pounds his head.[60]

It seemed as though the frontier had bled over into the interior. Violence, once the exception in the more settled areas of the southern colonies, rapidly became the norm as the British pushed out from their new base in Charleston. While Cornwallis was sensitive to his orders to pacify the south and create a holding force of loyal militias and Provincials – a recent study by Gregory J. W. Urwin has shown the lengths Cornwallis went to curtail looting by his army during the southern campaigns – his subordinates too often proved to have other priorities. While the British high command made plans involving the integration of Loyalist and British control, officers and soldiers on the ground frequently thought little of attacking the property and persons of those they deemed rebels. Adding pre-existing animosity to the partisan warfare in the south 'and the continual *petite guerre* that made up much of the fighting in America, generated pressures that inclined soldiers to take revenge, or relieve frustrations, on innocent civilians.'[61] This in turn ensured that 'British depredations made enemies out of American moderates who had not yet embraced the revolution, alienated numerous Loyalists, and filled many Rebels with a desperate resolution to continue the fight.'[62]

The massacre which took place at Piney Bottom Creek and the retaliatory murders that followed provides a telling snapshot of the relentless violence that dominated the south in the final phase of the war. In April 1781 a force of Patriot militia commanded by Colonel Thomas Wade decided that it was time to disband.[63] After encamping for the night at Piney Bottom beyond the Cape

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[60] 'At a Council held at His Excellency's House in Savannah, on Saturday the 17th Day of June 1780' in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, Volume 10*, ed. Lilla M. Hawes (Savannah, GA: The Georgia Historical Society, 1952), 109.
[61] Stephen Conway, '"The Great Mischief Complain'd of": Reflections on the Misconduct of British Soldiers in the Revolutionary War.' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 3, 1990, 377. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2938093.
[62] Gregory J. W. Urwin, *'To bring the American Army under strict Discipline': British Army Foraging Policy in the South, 1780–81* (December 11, 2017), accessed online at Sage Journals https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0968344517707976 02/02/2019.
[63] Accounts of the massacre variously place it as occurring in April or August 1781, but the former is by far the most likely.

Fear river, several militiamen visited local residences and stole a number of items, an act which alerted nearby Loyalists to their presence. They gathered and surprised the camp, killing six men along with a surrendering boy, a broadsword splitting his head 'so that one half of it fell on one shoulder and the other half on the other shoulder.'[64] Wade and his subordinate, Captain Culp, escaped and managed to return home, where they collected a band bent on revenge.

They made first for the residence of one Daniel Patterson, who they whipped until he divulged the names of those responsible for the killings at Piney Bottom. The Patriot band then visited a number of homes the following day, rounding up prisoners. One captured group tried to make their escape, and were subsequently chased down and killed:

> Alexander McLeod was first taken out… the men on horseback shot McLeod, putting three musket balls into him, and he fell dead on the spot. John Clarke, after having been shot, ran into the house and died immediately. Duncan Currie, in an effort to escape, had just got over a high fence… but was shot down on the outside. Daniel McMillan came into the house begging for his life, with blood streaming from his side, his hunting shirt on fire, where he had been shot in the shoulder, his wrist cut and broken by a sword, his arm shattered and torn by a musket ball, two or three balls having passed through his body; but revenge was not yet satisfied, and another ball through his breast near the left shoulder, soon put an end to his sufferings. Allan McSweene… ran about a quarter of a mile before they overtook him, and shot him down, putting several balls into his body, and then, having fallen on his face, they split his head open to the nose.[65]

Not satiated, the Patriot band carried on seizing prisoners, robbing, and burning property. Stimmed for a while by the belief that one of their captives was infected with smallpox, they never-the-less 'continued their raids into present Hoke County, where more Tories were found and shot.'[66] Nor were

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[64] Eli Washington Caruthers, *Revolutionary Incidents and Sketches of Character, Chiefly in the "Old North State"* (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1854), 384 – 385.
[65] Ibid, 388 – 389.
[66] Mary Louise Medley, *History of Anson County, North Carolina, 1750 – 1976* (Charlotte, NC: Heritage Printers, Inc. 1976), 57.

Loyalists the only victims, for one Patriot militiaman, Archibald McBride, 'was found in company with a man who had been at the Piney Bottom [Peter Blue], and without any inquiry, or waiting for explanation, they recklessly shot him down.'[67]

Following the murder of McBride and Blue the Patriots disbanded, yet still the cycle of bloodshed was not complete. The Turner family pursued Captain Culp, 'followed him to his own house, called him out at night, and accused him of whipping one of their brothers… he was immediately shot down in his own yard.'[68]

The killings at Piney Bottom and the further rampage that followed provide an example of the violence that perforated the south in 1780 and 1781 and helps to highlight the general nature of massacre during the last years of the revolution. While large-scale, well-documented clashes between regular soldiers, like Paoli or Waxhaws, made literal headlines and gained propaganda traction, the regular experience of smaller acts of extreme violence was closer to the norm for many combatants. Piney Bottom appears to have gone largely unnoticed by anyone outside the Cape Fear region, and memory of it having taken place at all barely survived into the nineteenth century. Yet the killings included many of the motifs we recognise from more infamous massacres, including the murder of an innocent and a rallying cry for vengeance that lead to further death and devastation. Armies did not shift on account of it, and the press did not retell it to angry readers, yet it and other acts like it perpetrated the cycle. It was massacres like Piney Bottom, taken in sum, that led General Greene to despair about the very depopulation of the country he was trying to liberate.

Colonel Wade was soon under arms again with his men, as ferocious fighting swept through North Carolina – engagements were fought between Loyalist and Patriot militias at Elizabethtown, McPhaul's Mill, Kirk's Farm, Crane Creek, Raft Swamp, Rockfish Creek and a plethora of other places.

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[67] Caruthers, *Revolutionary Incidents*, 393 – 394.
[68] Ibid, 395.

Sometimes these clashes were between a few dozen combatants, while at other times there were well over a thousand men engaged. Often the only surviving evidence of such fights are short mentions in pension statements given in the 1820s and 1830s, or fragments of oral history recorded by visiting nineteenth-century antiquarians. While the massacres inflicted during this civil war almost always occurred out of sight of regular British officers and ranking Crown officials, many of Cornwallis's immediate subordinates actively sought to fan the flames, regardless of the desire of senior commanders and ministers to curtail the chaos.

Major James Wemyss was one such activist in the proliferation of violence in the south, a British soldier who earned particular notoriety among the Patriots for the burning of numerous properties along the Pee Dee River between Kingstree and Cheraw in 1780. He was immortalised in southern folk legend alongside the likes of Tarleton as a savage who torched homesteads and arbitrarily murdered civilians. On the latter count Wemyss' story has certainly become exaggerated – though he did engage in a profligate burning spree, there is only evidence of one man having been executed.[69] Though the targeting of civilians was certainly a murkier issue during this period of the revolution than is sometimes given credit for (the blurred line between a militiaman and a civilian, and indeed a paroled militiaman and one who had taken up arms once again was something exploited by both sides), Crown Forces vented their rage throughout 1780 and 1781 with the destruction of large amounts of southern property. Commenting on Wemyss and his campaign, Patriot William Dobein James recalled how:

> The country through which Wemyss had marched, for seventy miles in length, and at places for fifteen miles in width, exhibited one continued scene of desolation. On most of the plantations every house was burnt to the ground, the negroes were carried off, the inhabitants plundered, the stock, especially sheep,

[69] Hugh F. Rankin, *Francis Marion: The Swamp Fox* (Springfield OH: Crowell, 1973), 78.

> wantonly killed, and all provisions, which could be come at, destroyed.[70]

While James gives a general indication of the destruction wreaked by British forces, the story of the Frierson family is instructive as a personal account. Recorded for a local history of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, it gives us not only a snapshot of Revolutionary War lore in the nineteenth century, but also provides us with an example of the violence meted out to non-combatants:

> A party of Wemyss's men came to the house of Mr. John Frierson… the officer in command threatened Mrs. Frierson, in the most profane and insulting language, that unless she revealed the place of her husband's concealment he would burn her up in the house. She was accordingly forced in, leading her little son, four years old, who yet lives to tell the tale of horror. The house was fired on the roof, and sentinels were placed at each door to prevent her exit. The roof was soon in flames… it was not until the intense heat of the burning mansion forced the sentinels from the doors that she was suffered to escape. The bee-hives were knocked to pieces, and the honey poured on the ground in mere wantonness; pigs, poultry, and every living thing that could be caught, were thrown into the flames and burned to death.[71]

There was particular antagonism in some army circles for what the likes of Wemyss termed Presbyterian sedition shops. A Loyalist officer, Anthony Allaire, during his captivity with the Patriot militia of the Carolinas, described in his diary how 'we heard a Presbyterian sermon, truly adapted to their principles and the times: or, rather, stuffed as full of Republicanism as their camp is of horse thieves.'[72] British officers noted that Presbyterian congregations often appeared particularly sympathetic to the rebellion, especially among the Ulster-Scots communities on the frontier, and rapidly began 'associating religious dissent and nonconformity with rebellion.'[73]

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[70] William Dobein James*, Swamp Fox: General Francis Marion and His Guerrilla Fighters of the American Revolutionary War* (Columbia, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 31.
[71] George Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina, Volume 1* (Columbia, SC: Duffie and Chapman, 1870), 483.
[72] Allaire, 'Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire' in *King's Mountain and its Heroes*, ed. Lyman C. Draper, 512.
[73] O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America*, 259

Wemyss seems to have had a particular hatred of Presbyterianism in the colonies, burning a church at Indiantown on August 27 1780, to the outrage of those living nearby.

As the fighting in the Carolinas flared along the routes of British and Loyalist expeditions, thousands of enslaved people continued to make bids for freedom. 'Tories, privateers, and banditti, often allied with fugitive slaves,' took advantage of the chaos to facilitate escape attempts, and 'British raiders took particular delight in freeing the slaves of the great Patriots,' as they did with a number of Washington's and Jefferson's enslaved peoples in Virginia in 1781. Clinton's 1779 Philipsburg Proclamation, often overlooked in significance in favour of Dunmore's Proclamation, formally extended the scope of that first ruling and ratified it as the official, considered policy of the British Crown and government – now the slaves of rebelling masters throughout the colonies were guaranteed freedom, whether or not they chose to enlist in the Crown Forces. Much like Dunmore's efforts, the Philipsburg Proclamation resulted from a 'dialectical relationship of slave resistance and the British strategy of racial manipulation.'[74] It was intended to undermine Patriot efforts and provide the British with a means of easy manual labour, but 'many slaves interpreted it as an emancipation measure,'[75] a fact that infuriated whites on both sides of the conflict. During the war a total of nearly one in five slaves 'left their homes, fleeing American slavery in search of British liberty.'[76] Patriot propagandists consequently continued to highlight what they viewed as the total degeneration of law and order, utilising much of the same rhetoric they had employed against the British over the use of Native American allies. As Robert G. Parkinson put it, 'colonists had always been uneasy about Indian attacks and slave uprisings. That some Indians and enslaved Africans had seemingly sided with the tyrant king confirmed their worst fears.'[77]

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[74] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 108.
[75] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 150.
[76] Jill Lepore *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2018), p. 100.
[77] Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 542.

The chaos unleashed by the arrival of Crown Forces and the bloodshed at Waxhaws produced dire consequences for the British and their Loyalist allies. As the autumn of 1780 turned to winter, Cornwallis dispatched Major Patrick Ferguson into the Carolina backcountry. Appointed to the rank of Inspector of Militia in May of that year, Ferguson's orders were to provide a rallying point for Loyalists in the interior, raising and organising them into a force that could hold the backcountry when the regulars moved on and restore some degree of order to a colony stirred up by word of massacre.

The Failure of British Command in the South

Ferguson, who had himself commanded the Crown Forces in the massacre at Little Egg Harbor in 1778, was emblematic of a particular breed of mid-ranking British officer Cornwallis came to rely on in the vital final phase of the war. Like Tarleton or André, he was noted for not just gallantry and civility when dealing with his peers, but also ambition and self-assurance that could turn to arrogance. Such characteristics are readily visible in his dealings with the inhabitants of the Carolina backcountry. Upon reaching the British outpost at Ninety Six he stated that 'we come not to make war upon women and children, but to give them money and relieve their distresses.'[78] A more sneering tone soon entered his declarations when he addressed the inhabitants of North Carolina upon learning of the approach of the Patriot Overmountain Men; 'if you choose to be degraded forever and ever by a set of mongrels, say so at once, and let your women turn their backs upon you, and look out for real men to protect them.'[79] Ferguson had already stated his personal belief that 'the homes and property of all Continental civil and military officials, anyone connected with privateering, and those profiting from

[78] Adam Ferguson, *Biographical Sketch, or Memoir, of Lieutenant-Colonel Patrick Ferguson* (Edinburgh: John Moir, 1817), 29.
[79] Patrick Ferguson, 'Denard's Ford, Broad River' in *King's Mountain and its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780*, ed. Lyman C. Draper, (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881), 204.

the impoverishment of Loyalists as eligible for plunder,' and was happy to unleash his men on anyone he considered disloyal to the king.[80]

Such attitudes ran rife through the regimental-level British Army officers who in the south frequently commanded their own detachments and outposts. Tarleton and Wemyss's misdemeanours have already been documented. Francis Rawdon, already mentioned for his mocking attitude towards claims of rape while stationed in New York, had also acquired an unsavoury reputation among the Patriots, along with a few of his allies. A Hessian lieutenant wrote in 1779 that 'the English soldiers, especially those of Lord Rawdon's Corps, perpetrate daily the grossest highway-robberies and even kill,' while Rawdon himself wrote following the battle of Harlem Heights that 'we should (whenever we get further into the country) give free liberty to the soldiers to ravage at will, that these infatuated wretches may feel what a calamity war is.' [81] [82]

Rawdon was part of the clique of British officers – again, almost all of them at vital mid-ranking levels – who believed that the colonial revolt would be defeated with harsh treatment rather than clemency. They took a view that 'leniency only left hapless loyalists in thrall to Bible-thumping, canting traitors' and that the only solution was 'making all-out war on the Americans.'[83] Such policies, they argued, had worked in Scotland and Ireland, thereby ignoring the great many differences between those areas of conflict and the Thirteen Colonies.

Age was another factor that united most of the men who found themselves with important independent tasks during the southern campaign, and should not be overlooked when considering the profile of the officers making vital decisions during that period of the war. Tarleton and Rawdon were both 26 in

[80] Urwin, *'To bring the American Army under strict Discipline',* accessed online at Sage Journals https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0968344517707976 02/02/2019.

[81] Paul David Nelson*, Francis Rawdon-Hastings, Marquess of Hastings: Soldier, Peer of the Realm, Governor-General of India* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh and Dickinson Press, 2005), 66.
[82] Ibid, 49.
[83] Ibid.

1780, James Wemyss was 32 and Ferguson was 36, all young for eighteenth century British Army officers receiving such vital commands. Their relative lack of experience was reflected by their modest rank on the regular establishment. In 1780 Ferguson, Tarleton and Wemyss were all majors in the British Army and Rawdon a lieutenant colonel, yet both Tarleton and Ferguson commanded a small army at Cowpens and King's Mountain respectively, while after Cornwallis invaded Virginia Rawdon found himself *de facto* commander of all Crown Forces in both Carolinas. The increasingly desperate circumstances faced by the British in the south – not least of which was a chronic shortage of manpower given the vast territory that needed to be policed – had thrust these officers into roles that would play a vital part in deciding the course of the war. None showed any particular belief in Clinton's stated desire to win the hearts and subdue the minds of the colonists, preferring instead to focus on short-term military victories and personal advancement. This was an attitude which 'squandered public good will through actual or perceived egregious actions that, while perhaps militarily necessary, violated popularly held concepts of the civilized conduct of war.'[84] It fed the cycle of violence in the south, and was a key element in fatally undermining Cornwallis's position.

It should be pointed out, given the unflattering portrait painted of these British officers, that the caricature of the likes of Tarleton in later popular southern mythology is certainly excessive. There is no solid evidence to suggest that he, for example, had the graves of slain Patriots desecrated or ordered foetuses to be cut from pregnant women's wombs. As Sylvia Frey writes regarding the fighting in the south, 'atrocities perpetrated against women and children by British forces were individual acts and not acts of policy… indeed, the British military command denounced such actions as reprehensible and instituted measures designed to prevent them.'[85] On one occasion Tarleton wrote to Cornwallis apologising for his men's irregularities, stating 'the officers have kept me in ignorance or steps should have been taken

[84] Carpenter, *Southern Gambit*, 84.
[85] Frey, *Water from the Rock*, 116.

immediately to suppress it.'[86] On another Tarleton halted his troops while on the march in Virginia 'for the convenient inspection of the inhabitants, and to facilitate the discovery of the villains who had committed atrocious outrages the preceding evening. A sergeant and private dragoon were pointed out, and accused of rape and robbery: They were conducted to Halifax, where they were condemned to death.'[87]

It does seem difficult to believe that all such infractions were dealt with in a similar fashion. For Crown Forces manpower was scarce, and executions corroboratively rare. It is worth pointing out that in the above incident Cornwallis himself interceded on the locals' behalf, and Tarleton noted what probably constituted at least part of the reason for the executions, as a staged example – 'the immediate infliction of the sentence exhibited to the army and manifested to the country the discipline and justice of the British general.'[88] An equally common response among British officers would be Rawdon's when, in 1780, he pardoned a sergeant and corporal of his Volunteers of Ireland due to be demoted and flogged, 'causing General Pattison to admonish him for what he thought was too-lax discipline.'[89] Indeed Rawdon had lost an earlier posting as Clinton's aide de camp in part because he refused to accept criticism of his Volunteers.

Men like Tarleton, Ferguson and Rawdon rarely acted in a manner considered unbecoming of a gentleman in the eighteenth century. It was as much their adherence to gentlemanly conduct that made them popular among the closed ranks of the British Army's officer class as it was their military ability. Their personal civility, however, did not disbar any of them from acts of brutality against their king's enemies. Rawdon's blithe quips to his uncle about the abuse of women wouldn't have caused any sort of stir among Britain's gentrified class, and when Tarleton hung captured parole breakers or burned Patriot militiamen's homesteads he wasn't acting outside

[86] Anthony J. Scotti Jr., *Brutal Virtue: The Myth and Reality of Banastre Tarleton* (Westminster, MA: Heritage Books, 2007), 168.
[87] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 297 – 298.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Nelson, *Francis Rawdon-Hastings*, 66.

of the rules of war as they were understood by most Europeans in the eighteenth century. The fact that their peers would have found little untoward in their actions, however, certainly did not exonerate them in the eyes of the Patriots or the many colonists who experienced deprivation at their hands. Ferguson, Tarleton, Rawdon and Wemyss, all generally held to be gallant officers by their army peers, were all still 'advocates of brutal repression' when it came to the war in the South.[90] They were also indispensable to Cornwallis. Even if he had wished to chastise them (and there is little evidence that he had the stomach to), Cornwallis could not afford a falling out with the likes of Tarleton – the commander of his light cavalry – or Ferguson – the commander of much of his militia.

Antagonisms towards the colonists, a frequent lack of discipline and an unwillingness to adhere to the wider British war policy ensured that Ferguson soon found himself in a hornet's nest in the South Carolina backcountry. Events earlier in 1780 – Waxhaws and the rumours of massacre, Henry Clinton's revocation of Charleston's terms of surrender (he now demanded that all paroled Whigs take up arms for the Crown if called upon to do so), and British attacks on private property had all combined through the summer to stir up the backcountry inhabitants against the Crown Forces occupation, especially among the Presbyterians of the frontier.[91]

King's Mountain

Ferguson also failed to fully appreciate the cultural differences in the interior of the Carolinas, especially when compared to the lifestyles of the low county planters who had been largely subdued by the fall of Charleston. Migration patterns had combined with local geography to leave the societies of the Carolinas even more heavily stratified than most North American colonies in 1775. Throughout the eighteenth century the wealthy planter class, most heavily concentrated in the low country of South Carolina and along the coastal regions, had become increasingly distinct from the back-country and

[90] O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America*, 259
[91] Walker, *The Battles of Kings Mountain and Cowpens*, 60.

the frontier settlements that sprung up along – and over – the Appalachians. According to the studies of John Spencer Bassett, the low country gentry of this period 'took little interest in the frontier inhabitants except to tax them.'[92]

Economic depression in the coastal regions in the late 1750s and early 1760s caused the amount of debt in the colony to skyrocket – in 1755 in Orange County there were seven debt cases recorded by magistrates, while in 1765 there were 111.[93] This combined with the rise of a powerful and influential middling class of lawyers and merchants to create a surge of dissatisfaction in the interior region. In the late 1760s various groups were formed to 'regulate and reform government abuse,' groups that eventually coalesced into a 'farmers reform movement' that called themselves the Regulators. [94] In 1768, partly inspired by news of the Saint George's Fields massacre in London earlier that year, they broke up the provincial court at Hillsborough, and over the next few years harassed provincial government officials, withheld taxes and disrupted court cases.[95] In 1771 they amassed in an effort to intimidate the royal governor of South Carolina, William Tryon. In response Tryon raised the militia, attacked the Regulator forces at Great Alamance Creek and soundly defeated them.

Historians have debated the exact nature of the regulator movement – some, like Bassett or William S. Powell, have seen it as a regional struggle between the interior and the coastal regions, others like Elisha Douglass and Marvin L. Michael Kay as a wealth and class-based conflict between powerful planters and poor frontiersmen.[96] More modern studies, such as those of James Whittenburg or Majoleine Kars, have identified the part played by a newly arrived middle class of lawmen and traders that managed to antagonise both the common people whose money they relied on and the planter class they

[92] James Whittenburg, 'Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers: Social Change and the Origins of the North Carolina Regulation' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1977, 216.
[93] Ibid, 226.
[94] Marjoleine Kars, *Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 1 – 2.
[95] Ibid, 248.
[96] Whittenburg, 'Planters, Merchants, and Lawyers,' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 216 – 219.

displaced in the towns and settlements of the piedmont area. More pertinent to the British campaigns of 1780 and 1781 is the nature of the backcountry settler's mentality, coalescing for decades prior to the Regulator movement and given violent animation by any perceived attempt by governing forces – colonial or British – to impose authority upon them. A culture of unrest and violence was emphasised that by the time the British seized Charleston 'much of the South, and especially the backcountry regions of North and South Carolina, had been in the grip of violence for almost two decades.'[97] It was against this mind-set that British officers like Ferguson, with arrogant declarations and the burning of homesteads, set themselves.

Patriot militia bands gathered to oppose Ferguson's Loyalist muster, their numbers supplemented by groups of so-called Overmountain Men, settlers from beyond the Appalachian Mountains experienced in wilderness lifestyle and frontier warfare. Learning that large numbers of militiamen were mustering at Sycamore Sholes with the intent of attacking his force, Ferguson began to withdraw towards British-held Charlotte. He did so at a glacial pace however, seemingly less afraid of the rebels than he was of losing the independent command he so yearned for by having to re-join Cornwallis. His hubris saw him initially prevaricate for three days before pausing with only a day's journey remaining to encamp at a site known as King's Mountain. Eager to catch him, the Patriot militia marched through the night, and engaged Ferguson's Loyalists on October 7 1780.

A fluid command and control structure and expertise in bush fighting allowed the Patriots to quickly surround and pick away at the Loyalist positions. Whenever Crown Forces mounted a bayonet charge to drive off the Patriots, they would simply withdraw before them, then return when the Loyalists pulled back to their starting points. After an hour Ferguson's command began to deteriorate. The Loyalists were pushed back to their encampment, where groups started to surrender. Ferguson himself was killed. His second in command, Abraham DePeyster, sent out a white flag asking for terms.

[97] Hoock, *Scars of Independence,* 302.

Said terms were not immediately received, in part because the Overmountain Men 'saw an opponent's surrender as simply an opportunity to shoot more and easier targets… it took heroic efforts by [Patriot colonels] Campbell, Shelby and Sevier, at risk to their own lives, to halt the massacre.'[98] One militiaman, incorrectly believing his father to have been killed, 'kept up firing upon the huddled Tories, until admonished to cease, when he excitedly cried out… "the damned rascals have killed my father, and I'll keep loading and shooting till I kill every son of a bitch of them."'[99]

Other accounts corroborate the fact that the Patriots continued to fire on the Loyalists after they had surrendered. Militia colonel Isaac Shelby wrote that 'it was some time before a complete cessation of firing, on our part, could be effected,' while militiaman Andrew Evins later recounted how another Patriot officer stopped him firing at the surrendering Loyalists, 'at the time of the surrender, for when I went to fire at the Enemy, Campbell threw up my gun and said, "Evins, for God's sake don't shoot – it is murder to kill them now, for they have raised the flag.' [100] [101] Robert Draper also recorded a later incident when the Patriots were fired on by a Loyalist foraging party unaware of the engagement. The militia, perhaps believing the shots to have come from Tarleton's expected relief force, or even from the Loyalist prisoners themselves, opened fire on those captives they'd corralled at the top of the mountain.[102]

Given the decentralised nature of Patriot command during the battle, the steep slopes and heavy woodland of King's Mountain itself, not to mention the exhausted state of the militia who had force marched through the night, it does seem natural to expect that some militiamen continued to fire on their

[98] Bicheno, *Rebels and Redcoats*, 194.
[99] Lyman C. Draper, *King's Mountain and its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780* (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881), 282.
[100] Isaac Shelby, 'Colonel Isaac Shelby's Pamphlet to the Public, 1823' in *The Battle of King's Mountain: Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Robert M. Dunkerly (Charleston, SC, The History Press, 2007), location 1140/2585 (kindle edition 2013).
[101] Andrew Evins, 'Statement of Andrew Evins' in *The Battle of King's Mountain: Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Robert M. Dunkerly (Charleston, SC, The History Press, 2007), location 1863/2585 (kindle edition 2013).
[102] Draper, *King's Mountain and its Heroes*, 284 – 285.

opponents after they had attempted to surrender. The claims made by some that 'the slaughter continued until the Americans were weary of killing' certainly seems like exaggeration, as evidenced by the taking of close to seven hundred prisoners.[103] That being said, at least one modern author has drawn direct parallels between King's Mountain and Waxhaws, writing that 'many Patriots shouting "Tarleton's Quarter" assaulted and butchered unarmed and surrendering Loyalists in a mirror image of the Waxhaws Massacre until Lieutenant Colonel Campbell reasserted control.'[104] And if some Patriots did indeed set about slaughtering their enemies as they tried to surrender, the treatment that Loyalist prisoners endured in the days and weeks after the actual engagement was equally reprehensive.

The Patriots were acutely aware of the dangers of falling victim to their own success – while the victory was a crucial one, it left them just a day from the British outpost at Charlotte, with the imaged threat of Tarleton bearing down on them and the spectre of retaliatory massacre. They also, in their rush to catch Ferguson, had left themselves short on supplies. As the Patriots returned to the backcountry they paused at the home of the Biggerstaff family near Gilbert Town, a week after the battle, and began executing prisoners. Thirty-six Loyalists were singled out and forced to submit to a court-martial that found them guilty of various crimes, from breaking parole or defecting from the Patriot cause, to 'breaking open houses, killing men, and turning the women and children out of doors, and burning the houses.'[105] Nine men, described by one militiaman as 'some of the most audacious and murderous Tories' were strung up that evening.[106] In his diary Loyalist prisoner Anthony Allaire called those singled out as 'those who had the most influence in the

[103] Robert O. DeMond, *The Loyalists in North Carolina During the Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1940), 132.
[104] Carpenter, *Southern Gambit*, 127.
[105] John J. Hardin, 'Description by John J. Hardin of the Battle of King's Mountain, based on Isaac Shelby's recollections' in *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Volume 15, 1780 – 1781*, ed Walter Clark (Winston, NC: M. J. and J. C Stewart, 1895), 109.
[106] William Lenoir, 'William Lenoir's Account' in *The Battle of King's Mountain: Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Robert M. Dunkerly (Charleston, SC, The History Press, 2007), 872/2585 (kindle edition 2013).

country… who unfortunately fell a sacrifice to their infamous mock jury.'[107] After the first nine deaths the rest were reprieved, in some accounts at the urging of the local Biggerstaff family, in others by Colonel Shelby, possibly because of fear over retribution from Tarleton should he catch the retreating militia.[108]

The next day the column moved off at five in the morning and continued marching all day through the rain. At this point supplies were running low, and according to Allaire none of the prisoners had eaten either bread or meat for two days. Some prisoners attempted to escape, but were recaptured and executed. [109] Several British accounts assert that the Patriot militia were under orders to open fire on the prisoners in the event of Tarleton catching up with them.[110][111] Colonel Campbell, writing in his general orders to the militia forces on October 11, did 'request the officers of all ranks in the army to endeavour to restrain the disorderly manner of slaughtering and disturbing the prisoners,' and was left lambasting 'the plundering parties who issue out from the camp, and indiscriminately rob both Whig and Tory, leaving our friends, I believe, in a worse situation than the enemy would have done.'[112]

Loyalist accounts provided a more damning verdict of the events hinted at in Campbell's orders. Allaire recorded that during the march 'several of the [Loyalist] militia that were worn out with fatigue, and not being able to keep up, were cut down, and trodden to death in the mire.'[113] Writing in a separate account, he stated that 'the rebel officers would often go in amongst the prisoners, draw their swords, cut down and wound those whom their wicked

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[107] Anthony Allaire, 'Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire, of Ferguson's Corps' in *King's Mountain and its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780*, ed. Lyman C. Draper, (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881), 511.
[108] DeMond, *The Loyalists in North Carolina*, 132 – 133.
[109] Allaire, 'Diary of Lieut. Anthony Allaire' in *King's Mountain and its Heroes*, ed. Lyman C. Draper, 511.
[110] 'Description of the treatment of British prisoners of war' in *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, Volume 15, 1780 – 1781*, ed Walter Clark (Winston, NC: M. J. and J. C Stewart, 1895), 183.
[111] Allaire, 'King's Mountain Battle' in *King's Mountain and its Heroes*, 518.
[112] William Campbell, 'Col. Campbell's General Orders' in *King's Mountain and its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain, October 7th, 1780*, ed. Lyman C. Draper, (Cincinnati: Peter G. Thomson, 1881), 531 – 532.
[113] Allaire, 'King's Mountain Battle' in *King's Mountain and its Heroes*, 518.

and savage minds prompted.'[114] Another diary kept by Loyalist captain Alexander Chesney corroborates Allaire's experiences, describing how as they marched the Patriots went about 'cutting and striking us by the road in a savage manner.'[115]

The hatred exhibited by the Overmountain Men was certainly not contrary to the spirit of the war in the Carolinas in 1780. With such a rapid degeneration into violence, however, it is worthwhile remembering that outside of the frontier such a state of affairs had not been the norm. The men from across the Appalachians brought the violence they practiced – and expected to have practiced upon them – into the settled part of the colony proper, where it found accord with the chaos resulting from British occupation and fears heightened by the imaginings of slave revolts and bloodthirsty massacres. Occasionally a commentator from outside the deadly web of animosities and reprisals that had sprung up in the south would highlight a sense of shock at the war's progress there. Such an account can be found in the writings of Mercy Warren, a keen New England Whig before and during the conflict, who in her *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution* described the execution of Loyalist prisoners as 'imposed by order of some of those fierce and uncivilised chieftains, who had spent most of their lives in the mountains and forests, amidst the slaughter of wild animals, which was necessary to their daily subsistence.'[116]

The sense of disdain exhibited towards the violent, 'savage' practices of the frontiersmen was partly ameliorated in the next breath, for Warren went on to add that 'all compassionate sensations might be totally deadened by the example of the British, who seemed to estimate the life of a man, on the same grade with that of the animal of the forest.' Such a view seems to be a fair approximation of the attitude of many advocates of both sides not directly

[114] Ibid, 518 - 519.
[115] Alexander Chesney, 'Diary of Captain Alexander Chesney' in *The King's Mountain Men: The Story of the Battle, with Sketches of the American Soldiers who Took Part*, ed. Katherine Keogh White (Dayton, VA: Clearfield Publishing, 1924), 112.
[116] Mercy Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution, Volume II* (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1805), 251.

involved in the fighting in the south – in their view unpleasant things were happening, but when the enemy committed massacres like Waxhaws they were merely to be expected. Such ambivalence did nothing to lessen the cycle of bloodshed.

The massacre at King's Mountain had a resounding effect on the war in the south. Cornwallis was forced to abandon much of the progress he had made over the summer of 1780, and stall plans to invade North Carolina. More importantly, the defeat had eliminated the core of the Loyalist militia raised in South Carolina, and ensured that others who may have been supportive towards the royal cause would now think twice before coming forward. In a letter to Clinton dated December 3 1780, Cornwallis complained that the Loyalist militia of Ninety Six 'was so totally dispirited by the defeat of Ferguson, that of the whole district we could with difficulty assemble one hundred; and even those, I am convinced, could not have made the smallest resistance if they had been attacked.'[117] Cornwallis also wrote angrily to the Major General William Smallwood, then the ranking Continental Army officer in the Carolinas following Gates' debacle at the battle of Camden. He complained about the hanging of the Loyalists after King's Mountain, stating that 'the cruelty exercised on the prisoners taken under Major Ferguson is shocking to humanity; and the hanging of poor old Colonel Mills… was an act of most savage barbarity,' before adding that it 'must oblige me, in justice to the suffering Loyalists, to retaliate on the unfortunate persons now in my power.'[118] While Cornwallis restrained himself from summary executions, such letters followed a now-familiar pattern between opposing commanders following massacres, and did nothing to alleviate the violence now running rampant through the South.

[117] Charles Cornwallis, 'Earl Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton, Camp at Wynnesborough, Dec. 3' in *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis of Cornwallis, Volume 1*, ed. Charles Ross (London: John Murray, 1859), 71 - 72.
[118] Charles Cornwallis, 'Earl Cornwallis to Major-General Smallwood' in *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis of Cornwallis, Volume 1*, ed. Charles Ross (London: John Murray, 1859), 67.

The death of Ferguson and the destruction of his militia exposed the failings of British strategic military planning. While there were certainly Loyalists vehemently opposed to the rebellion in the colonies, fear of reprisals and the cycle of violence and intimidation kept men from the royal standards. Loyalists in Britain had simply not been able to organise effective governmental lobbies, with exiled governors and men of standing suddenly finding themselves far from the centres of power they had once enjoyed.[119] In the bloody environment of South Carolina in late 1780, Loyalists feared massacre as much as the Patriots had earlier that year. Such fears greatly hampered the Crown's plans, leaving Cornwallis without the base of support he had hoped existed in the southern colonies. Despite efforts to reassure the king's subjects that royal authority – and the protection that it supposedly guaranteed – was being restored, Loyalists soon found that their fears over fresh massacres to be well founded.

The Haw River Massacre

By early 1781, the situation faced by the British in the south showed little sign of stabilising. In January Tarleton, overconfident as ever, suffered a total defeat at the hands of Daniel Morgan in an area known as Hannah's Cowpens. As the battle ended and the Crown Forces line collapsed, Highlanders of the 71st Foot continued to fight in spite of the fact that victory was now clearly beyond their grasp. One of their officers later stated that their reluctance to surrender stemmed from their own orders, given they had been told 'to give no quarter' and did not expect to receive any back.[120] In his modern study of the battle, Lawrence Babits noted that Patriot officers 'tried to prevent a massacre' following the 71st's surrender, given the Highlanders had already been carrying out their orders that day, bayonetting Patriot wounded left behind during their advance.[121] One Continental officer told of how the 71st's grenadier commander, Captain Duncanson, told him 'they had

[119] Charles R. Ritcheson,'"Loyalist Influence" on British Policy Toward the United States After the American Revolution,' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1973.
[120] Lawrence E. Babits, *A Devil of a Whipping: The Battle of Cowpens* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 109.
[121] Ibid, 122.

orders to give no quarter, and they did not expect any; and as my men were coming up, he was afraid they would use him ill.'[122] Another commentator repeating a pension account delivered to him by one of William Washington's cavalrymen noted that, as they charged, Patriot dragoons cried out 'as their watchword, "Buford's play," referring to the odious massacre perpetrated on the detachment commanded by that officer.'[123]

Despite the past reference to massacre, the 71st did not suffer retribution at Cowpens, though an anonymous account in a Patriot periodical expressed a hint of disappointment at the lack of vengeance. The paper related how the Highlanders, on their knees, had claimed '"it has not been our fault, we have skivered [skewered] so many; we were obliged to obey our officers, and they commanded us to take no prisoners, except a few Continentals." We wish, it was replied, that this had been known a little sooner; but we do not destroy even our enemies in cold blood, especially when they are so much in our power.'[124] Indeed, in the opening of his letter to Greene describing his victory, Morgan noted that 'although the Progress of this [Tarleton's] Corps was marked with Burnings and Devastations & although' they have waged the most cruel Warfare, not a man was killed wounded or even insulted after he surrendered.'[125] The Patriots had successfully restrained themselves in the face of a vicious enemy, but in the south such acts of mercy were more infrequent that at any other point during the war. As part of Sumter's abortive militia attack on the Crown Forces outpost at Rocky Mount, a Continental Army dragoon officer, Major William Davie, launched a successful assault on a force of unsuspecting Loyalists encamped outside the nearby defences at Hanging Rock. Davie admitted that 'on meeting again the fire of the infantry

[122] John Eager Howard in *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans: With Biographical Sketches by Celebrated Authors* (Philadelphia: Rice, Rutter and Co., 1865), 8.
[123] Thomas Balch in 'Pension application of Lawrence Everhart S25068' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 25/04/2018.
[124] 'Pennsylvania Packet, Feb. 17th 1781' in *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene: 26 December 1780-29 March 1781, Volume 7*, eds. Richard K. Showman, Dennis Michael Conrad (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 157.
[125] Daniel Morgan, 'Camp Near Cain Creek, Jan nineteenth, 1781' in *The Life of General Daniel Morgan*, ed. James Graham (New York: H. W. Derby and Co, 1856), 467.

they [the Loyalists] all rushed against the angle of the fence where they were surrounded by the dragoons who had entered the field and literally cut to pieces: as this was done under the eye of the whole British camp no prisoners could be safely taken which may apologize for the slaughter that took place on this occasion.'[126] Detailing his service in his pension claim in 1820, Patriot soldier William King recounted having been at 'the massacre at the hanging rock,' and other Patriot accounts attest to it as a massacre.[127] Again, while it may have made military sense to take no prisoners given the circumstances, there can be no doubt that those Loyalists who survived the massacre, or those who witnessed the killings from the fort, would have come to hate their fellow Americans more fiercely.

By February 1781 the limitations of Britain's overarching southern strategy were fully apparent. Following Cowpens, Cornwallis attempted to catch and engage Greene's army, seeking to replicate the same sort of pitched battle that had all-but annihilated Gates's army at Camden. Greene was too wary to be drawn, however, and conducted a strategic retreat towards Virginia, aiming for the Dan River. He reached it first, on February 14, and was able to cross to safety. Cornwallis, his army exhausted and without supplies, called off the pursuit and withdrew to his new headquarters at Hillsborough. Both sides spent the next week resting their army, gathering supplies and tending to the sick and wounded.

Cornwallis once again issued a proclamation calling for Loyalists in North Carolina to rally to the royal cause, assisted by the printing press brought with the army by the accompanying former royal governor of the colony, Josiah Martin. The results were typically lukewarm. During the British Army's time in Hillsborough hundreds rode into camp and declared their loyalty to the king, then left again without providing any sort of material support.

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[126] William R. Davie, 'Recollections of Colonel William R. Davie' in *The Spirit Of Seventy-six: The Story Of The American Revolution As Told By Participants*, eds. Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (Indianapolis, NY: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1954), 1123.
[127] William King, 'Pension application of William King S38121' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 06/05/2018.

Tarleton blamed their reluctance on fear of reprisal; 'they acknowledged the continentals were chased out of the province; but they declared, they soon expected them to return, and the dread of violence and persecution prevented their taking a decided part with a cause which yet appeared dangerous.'[128] They were 'desirous of peace, but averse to every exertion that might tend to procure it.'[129] Cornwallis made the same observation a month and a half later, writing bitterly to Clinton that after issuing another proclamation following his bloody victory at Guilford Courthouse 'many of the inhabitants rode into camp, shook me by the hand, said they were glad to see us, and to hear that we had beaten Greene, and then rode home again.' [130] He repeated the same frustrations to Lord Germain, leaving little doubt about the shortcomings of the British ministry's southern strategy in a letter that stated:

> The principal reasons for undertaking the Winter's campaign were the difficulty of a defensive War in South Carolina, & the hopes that our friends in North Carolina, who were said to be very numerous, would make good their promises of assembling & taking an Active part with us. Our experience has shown that their numbers are not so great as had been represented, and that their friendship was only passive, for we have received little assistance from them since our arrival in the province.[131]

The years of violence in the south had left its mark. Both sides had suffered intimidation, home-burnings, assault and murder at the hands of their neighbours. General Greene himself wrote despairingly that:

> The animosity between the Whigs and Tories of this State renders their situation truly deplorable… some thousands have fallen in this way in this quarter, and the evil rages with more violence than ever. If a stop cannot be put to these massacres, the country will be depopulated in a few months more.[132]

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[128] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 237.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Charles Cornwallis, 'Lord Cornwallis to Sir Henry Clinton' in *The State Records of North Carolina, Volume 17*, ed. Walter Clark (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1899), 1011.
[131] Charles Cornwallis, 'Earl Cornwallis to Lord George Germain' in *The State Records of North Carolina, Volume 17*, ed. Walter Clark (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1899), 1015 - 1016.
[132] Nathanael Greene in *The Life of Nathanael Greene, Major-General in the Army of the Revolution, Volume 3*, ed. George Washington Greene (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), p. 227.

The Loyalist experience in particular had been endured without any form of support or protection from the Crown that now demanded their assistance and obedience. This resulted in a disinclination to aid the British once they finally arrived, for fear that as soon as the royal army inevitably marched on, those who had courted them would face retribution from both neighbours and the Patriot authorities. Other factors likely reinforced this. After the war, Clinton suggested that the Carolinians had been put off by the 'melancholy scene of his lordship's camp,' dissuaded as much by the visibly grim condition of the royal army as by the threat of Patriot violence.[133] It is also likely that plenty of the well-wishers who visited Cornwallis so briefly simply wished to assuage the most recent conqueror, and in reality wanted nothing more than to be left alone by both sides.

Regardless of personal reasons, the key point of Britain's strategy – raising southern Loyalists against the Patriots – was now clearly exposed as a fantasy. The reality faced by the Crown Forces was that they were alone and adrift, deep in hostile territory. In spite of this, one group did heed Cornwallis's rallying cry at Hillsborough. Doctor John Pyle, a prominent North Carolina Loyalist who had already fought for the British in the failed rising of 1776, was able to assemble around three hundred men in response to the Crown's summons. Hearing of their intention to join with him, Cornwallis dispatched a detachment under Tarleton to bring them in safely. Despite learning that Continental forces under Colonel Henry Lee were in the vicinity, the Loyalists failed to heed Tarleton's requests that they hurry, and according to his later account they had 'thought fit to pay visits to their kindred and acquaintance before they repaired to the British camp: Inspired by whiskey and the novelty of the situation, they unfortunately prolonged their excursions.'[134]

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[133] Henry Clinton, 'Observations on Some Parts of Earl Cornwallis's Answer to Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative' in *An Answer to that Part of the Narrative of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Clinton, K. B. Which Relates to the Conduct of Lieuteant-General Earl Cornwallis, During the Campaign in North-America, in the Year 1781*, ed. Charles Cornwallis (London: J. Debrett, 1783), 10.
[134] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 239.

Such aspersions are perhaps unfair to Pyle, and designed to conceal the primary mistake made by both Cornwallis and Tarleton - failure to assign a specific place for the Loyalists to link up with their escort. Certainly Pyle's forces were not just drunkenly roaming the countryside. They dispersed or outright defeated a number of smaller Patriot militia groups, including one Captain Joseph Hackney who, in a pension claim in 1832, described how 'himself and the whole of his company were made prisoners by a body of Tories under the command of Colonel Pyle.'[135]

Regardless of question over the professionalism of Pyle's brief command, the failure of the Loyalists to link with Tarleton was to prove fatal. Greene had dispatched Lee's Continental cavalry back across the Dan to harass the British and Loyalists, and they had joined up with local Patriot militia. Learning of both Tarleton and Pyle's presence, Lee resolved to attack Tarleton, realising that the uniforms of his own troopers were similar to those of Tarleton's after Loyalists in the area mistook him for more reinforcements sent from Hillsborough.

As they closed in on Tarleton, the Continental vanguard happened upon two Loyalist militiamen from Pyle's column. Thinking the Patriots were Tarleton's British Legion, they led Lee to Pyle's main body, by that time assembled close to the Haw river. Lee, believed by most of the Loyalists to be Tarleton himself, ordered Pyle's men to make way at the side of the road while his dragoons passed by.

What happened next remains the subject of some controversy and, as with Waxhaws, a fully satisfactory understanding will probably never be had. There are only a few certainties; that the Patriots drew close to the Loyalists before attacking them, and that in the space of about ten minutes the majority of Pyle's men were killed or wounded, with the rest hopelessly scattered.

[135] Joseph Hackney in *NC Patriots 1775 - 1783: Their Own Words, Volume 2 - the Provincial and State Troops (Part 2)*, ed. J. D. Lewis (Little River, SC: J. D. Lewis, 2012), 336.

The prime cause for debate rests on whether the Patriot assault was initially planned by Lee, or whether the fighting started unexpectedly when one party or the other realised the men before them were not allies. Immediately after the battle, Lee himself wrote that 'the [Continental] Legion cavalry passed them [the Loyalists] agreeable to order, as if British troops. I did this, that no time might be lost in reaching Col. Tarleton.'[136] While his desire to overlook attacking the militia in favour of a chance to strike at the greater prize represented by Tarleton is plausible, it contradicts the actions and motives described in his later memories. Writing in 1812, he claimed he 'had concluded to make known to the colonel [Pyle] his real character as soon as he should confront him, with a solemn assurance of his and his associates' perfect exemption from injury, with the choice of returning to their homes, or… uniting with the defenders of their common country.'[137] In both accounts he claims the situation only degenerated into violence when Loyalists spotted his own militia concealed nearby and opened fire.

Regardless of whether or not Lee intended to pass the Loyalists by or capture them, it seems the majority of his own men were not privy to any scheme involving deception. Andrew Pickens, commanding the Patriot militia ordered to outflank the Loyalists, wrote in his own after-action report to Greene that the locals 'rejoiced, imagining we were a fresh party of British… under the same deception they [Pyle's column] suffered Colonel Lee's horse to pass equal with their front. Our men were in some measure under the same mistake, but soon found out.'[138] Another Patriot, Joseph Graham, on several occasions directly refuted Lee's claim that the Loyalists began the engagement after noticing the nearby Patriot militia. In a letter to Archibald D. Murphy he writes that ‘Lee states that at Pyles’ defeat, the action was

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[136] Henry Lee, 'Henry Lee's Letter to Greene (Feb 25, 1781)' in *Pyle's Defeat - The Most Comprehensive Guide*, eds. Stewart Dunaway and Jeffrey Bright (Morrisville, NC: Lulu, 2011), 44.
[137] Henry Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States, Volume 1* (Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1812), 310.
[138] Andrew Pickens, 'Andrew Pickens Letter to Greene (Feb. 26, 1781)' in *Pyle's Defeat - The Most Comprehensive Guide*, eds. Stewart Dunaway and Jeffrey Bright (Morrisville, NC: Lulu, 2011), 45.

commenced by the firing of the Tories on the Militia, in his rear… If, however, he had inquired of Capt. Eggleston, he would have informed him otherwise.'[139] In another account he once again corrects Lee and comments on the confusion evident on both sides:

> Lee states… that Pyles' men, on seeing the militia, in the rear of his Cavalry, recognised and fired on them. The true statement is this… Graham riding along side of Capt. Eggleston who commanded the rear of Lee's horse, remarked to him, "That company is Tories - what is the reason they have their arms?" Capt. Eggleston addressing a good looking man at the end of the line, supposed to be an officer, inquired, "To whom do you belong?" The man promptly answered, "A friend to his Majesty." Whereupon Capt. Eggleston struck him over the head. The militia looking on, and waiting for orders, on this example being set, rushed on them like lightning and cut away.[140]

What confusion there was among the Patriots was even more pronounced among the Loyalists as the killing began. As they were rode down most appear to have believed a mistake was being made, and sought to ward off their attackers by repeating their loyalty to King George. The incident clearly had a powerful and confusing effect on those who experienced it. Even after it was over, Joseph Graham related that one captured Loyalist said to Lee '"Mr. Tarleton, you have this day killed a parcel of as good subjects as ever his Majesty had." Lee… interrupted him saying: "you d-d rascal if you call me Tarleton I will take off your head. I will undeceive you, we are the Americans and not the British. I am Lee of the American Legion and not Tarleton." The poor fellow appeared chop-fallen.'[141] Similarly, the first the real Tarleton knew of the massacre was when 'several wounded loyalists entered the British camp, and complained to Tarleton of the cruelty of his dragoons. Though the

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[139] Joseph Graham, 'Vesuvius Furnace, 20th of December, 1827' in *The Papers of Archibald D. Murphey, Volume 1*, ed. William Henry Hoyt (Raleigh, E. M. Uzzell & Co: 1914), 374.
[140] Joseph Graham, 'Revolutionary History of North Carolina: British Invasion of 1780 - 1781' in *The North Carolina University Magazine, Volume 5*, eds. H. R. Bryan, Clement Dowd, J. B. Killebrew, D. W. Johnson, A. H. Merritt, Coleman Sessions, A.C. Avery, T. C. Belsher, J. H. Coble, B. F. Grady Jr, L. N. Haley, W. H. Jordan (Raleigh: The Office of the Carolina Cultivator, 1856), 150.
[141] Graham, 'Revolutionary History of North Carolina' in *The North Carolina University Magazine*, 151.

accusation was erroneous, their sufferings were evident, and the cause from whence they proceeded was soon afterwards discovered.'[142]

Other accounts mix the confusion with what seems to have been a determined assault by Lee. A Patriot militiaman, Moses Hall, recalled in his pension claim that the Loyalists 'uttered salutations of a friendly kind believing us to be British. Col. Lee knew what this was about and so did Major Dixon. But I recollect that my Captain Hall perceiving they were Tories and thinking that Col. Lee did not know it… called to Col. Lee across the Tories line and told him "Col. Lee they are every blood of them Tories."' According to the account, Lee signalled the misunderstanding Hall to continue riding, until the Loyalist line was totally covered, at which point 'the bugle sounded to attack and the slaughter began.'[143] A pension record by militiaman Thomas Boyd also implies that the attack was conducted deliberately; 'facing to Pyles line, amidst shouts of long live King George from both parties, our troops drawing their swords attacked the Tories and cut them down… a great slaughter was made of the Tories whilst they were crying out that they were friends of King George.'[144] Another pension statement, by one Samuel Eakin, gives an even more chilling indication that the attack was both ordered, and slaughter was part of at least one Patriot officer's plan; 'a total rout and slaughter of the Enemy took place about four hundred out of the five hundred he thinks were killed on orders being to give them Blueford's [Buford's] play.'[145] Here we see the consequences of the brutality at Waxhaws, and the desire to repay massacre for massacre. The killing of fleeing or surrendering men was, at least to some present, permissible because of past atrocities. The killing of prisoners was

[142] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 239.
[143] Moses Hall, 'Pension application of Moses Hall W10105 f100NC 8/26/09' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 11/01/2018.
[144] Thomas Boyd, 'Pension application of Thomas Boyd S17286 fn 34NC 9/25/10' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 11/01/2018.
[145] Samuel Eakin, 'Pension application of Samuel Eakin S3317 fn17NC rev'd 6/23/11' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 11/01/2018.

emphasised by Cornwallis himself in a letter to Germain dated March 17 1781, where he mentions that Pyle's corps 'allowed themselves to be surrounded, and a number of them were most inhumanly butchered, when begging for quarters, without making the least resistance.'[146]

The murder of surrendering men is particularly noteworthy, and represents a perhaps overlooked difference between the incidents at Waxhaws and Haw River. While no accounts suggest that the killing of Patriot prisoners continued after the immediate fighting at Waxhaws was over, several accounts of the fate of Pyle's Loyalists speak of prisoners being murdered a good while after the engagement had ended, in much the same way that prisoners were killed in the days following the engagement at King's Mountain. In a footnote of his account Joseph Graham added that 'to our discredit it must be stated, that when the Indians [Catawaba Natives allied to Lee's force] came up, they were suffered to kill seven or eight wounded men.'[147] Another account of a different killing can be found in the pension statement of Moses Hall:

> The evening after our Battle with the Tories we having a considerable number of prisoners I recollect a scene which made a lasting impression upon my mind. I was invi [sic, invited?] by some of my comrades to go and see some of the prisoners. We went to where six were standing together. Some discussion taking place, I heard some of our men cry out "remember Bluford" and the prisoners were immediately hewed to pieces with broad swords. At first I bore the scene without any emotion, but, upon a moments reflection I felt such horror as I never did before nor have since, and returning to my quarters and throwing myself upon my blanket I contemplated the cruelties of war until overcome and unmanned by a distressing gloom from which I was not relieved until commencing our march next morning.[148]

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[146] Charles Cornwallis, 'General Earl Cornwallis to Lord Geo. Germain' in *The State Records of North Carolina, Volume 17*, ed. Walter Clark (Goldsboro, NC: Nash Brothers, 1899), 1000.
[147] Graham, 'Revolutionary History of North Carolina' in *The North Carolina University Magazine*, 150.
[148] Moses Hall, 'Pension application of Moses Hall W10105 f100NC 8/26/09' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 11/01/2018.

Again the phrase ‘remember Buford’ is noteworthy. Waxhaws and the escalation of violence throughout 1780 had a very tangible effect on combatants in later engagements. Had high-ranking British command elements come down on the mid to low-ranking officers who permitted personal vendettas or the wasting of territory, perhaps the situation in the south would not have deteriorated to the extent that it did. For the men who did the killing in Moses Hall’s statement, it is difficult to image any acceptance of defeat, any possibility of permitting an ongoing British presence in the colonies. From the perspectives of such men the British and Loyalists were now viewed as just as diabolical as the frontier Natives. The south’s crucible of violence had ‘enabled a different type of aggressive, less rule-bound commander to emerge – and, by leading American Loyalists against their own neighbours, to lastingly alienate local populations.’[149] Crown Forces had thus doomed their campaign from the start and ensured that ‘the toleration of violence against civilians created considerable distrust of the British among backcountry residents.’[150]

The loss of any moral superiority through the perpetration of massacres is further highlighted by Hall, whose narrative shows just how violence infected thoughts and actions during the war. After the killing of the Loyalist prisoners, Lee’s Patriots passed through an area that had recently been used by the British Legion as an encampment. There Hall found:

> A youth about sixteen who having come out to view the British… they had run him through with a bayonet. The sight of this unoffending boy butchered rather than be encumbered… on the march, I assume, relieved me of my distress and feelings for the slaughter of the Tories and I desired nothing so much as the opportunity of participating in their destruction.[151]

Neither Lee nor Pickens made any particular note of the scale of the killing of Pyle’s men in their reports to Greene, with Lee coming the closest in his later

[149] Hoock, *Scars of Independence,* 313.
[150] Walker, *The Battles of Kings Mountain and Cowpens*, 60.
[151] Moses Hall, 'Pension application of Moses Hall W10105 f100NC 8/26/09' *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 11/01/2018.

memoirs with a brief line about the fight being 'bloody on one side only.'[152] American historians writing in the nineteenth century heavily favoured Lee's claims, whether his initial one about wishing to simply bypass the Loyalists or his latter one stating that he intended to disarm Pyle's men without violence. William Johnson's 1822 *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene* holds that 'it is obvious that no present mischief was meant to the loyalists and but for their unfortunate fire upon the rear of the cavalry, they would either have been made prisoner, or passed unmolested.'[153] Writing in 1858, Henry B. Dawson stated that Lee's 'design was to pass in front of the enemy line, and place it under the control of his own force, when he proposed to make known his true character.'[154] Most of these accounts follow the narrative of the Loyalists discovering the nearby militia and firing on them, triggering a general engagement.

In the decades following the massacre local memory altered perceptions of events, as it did with so many other minor clashes during the Revolutionary War. Oral traditions among the residents of Orange County (which became Alamance County in 1849) disputed the exact location of the encounter and added embellishments, such as increasing the number of tory militia or having Pyle himself being run through (he was not). Commentators also leaned heavily on histories like as Lossing's *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*, and the mistakes in such works combined to mean that the reality of events 'begins to become socially constructed through folklore and legend.'[155] Interestingly however, while nineteenth century accounts usually work to absolve Lee of personal responsibility, they rarely shirk claims of a more general massacre. Dawson's retelling speaks of 'terrible slaughter' and

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[152] Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department, Volume 1*, 310.
[153] William Johnson*, Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene, Major General of the Armies of the United States, in the War of the Revolution, Volume 1* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1822), 455.
[154] Henry Barton Dawson, *Battles of the United States, By Sea and Land: Embracing those of the Revolutionary and Indian Wars, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War* (New York: Johnson, Fry, and Company, 1858), 660.
[155] Jeffery Bright, Stewart Dunaway, *Pyle's Defeat: The Most Comprehensive Guide* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu, 2011), 59.

'terrible carnage.'[156] Johnson's account is sensitive to the bloodshed, and speaks at length of how:

> This was a day of tears and lamentations to that neighbourhood… the soul sickens at such an instance of unresisted slaughter, and it has called down the severest animadversions upon the conduct of the American party. It is enough to be said of it, that there cannot be found such another instance of military execution inflicted by the American arms in the whole history of the revolution.[157]

That being said, he restates Lee's innocence and also highlights, probably quite fairly, the difficult nature of any such encounter - had the cavalry not immediately rushed in they may have been decimated by a volley from the Loyalists. Regardless of personal blame, there is no doubt that Pyle's command was devastated and, as at Waxhaws, the proportion of prisoners taken to men engaged was far lower than usual – a modern study has estimated that of the 200 men under Pyle's command, 93 were killed, 32 wounded and only 30 taken prisoner.[158] Here then was another example of the value of what Carpenter calls 'Patriot strategic communications':

> While the ruthlessness of Lee's legionnaires at Pyle's Massacre was and still is viewed as a clever use of operational deception leading to a valuable psychological victory, the actions of Tarleton's troops at Waxhaws was and is still portrayed as wanton brutality and senseless slaughter. Such is the value of propaganda to the side that most successfully employs it.[159]

The number of engagements with similarly bloody ratios in the south again shows us that the concept of massacre depended upon whether or not one side or the other specifically used the word. At an engagement at Hammond's Store, for example, Patriot cavalry under William Washington attacked a force of Loyalists who instantly broke before them. In an after-action letter to Nathanael Greene, Washington's then-commander, Daniel Morgan, reported that '150 were killed and wounded & About 40 Taken

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[156] Ibid.
[157] Johnson, *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene*, 455.
[158] Ibid, 35.
[159] Carpenter, *Southern Gambit*, 196.

Prisoners,' without any casualties being sustained in return.[160] One Patriot present during the battle recalled a grim story about its aftermath:

> We took a great many prisoners and killed a few… in Washington's corps there was a boy of fourteen or fifteen, a mere lad, who in crossing Tiger River was ducked by a blunder of his horse… he got very mad, and swore that, boy or no boy, he would kill a man that day or die. He accomplished the former. I remember very well being highly amused at the little fellow charging round a crib after a tory, slashing away with his puny arm, till he brought him down.[161]

Further south similarly bloody events were playing out. During the siege of Augusta Loyalists attempted to evacuate Fort Grierson, which had become untenable in the face of Patriot advances. The Patriots fell on the fleeing Loyalists. One officer recalled 'Capt. Alexander shooting Grason [Grierson, the Loyalist commander] for his villainous conduct in the country.'[162] Lee's memoirs and subsequent retellings describe the killing of prisoners:

> The militia of Georgia, under colonel [Elijah] Clarke, were so exasperated by the cruelties mutually inflicted… that they were disposed to sacrifice every man taken… Poor Grierson and several others had been killed after surrender… In no part of the South was the war conducted with such asperity as it was in this quarter. It often sunk into barbarity.[163]

The massacre of Grierson and his men had a strong effect on the defenders of Augusta. Lee wrote that 'already the humanity of the besieging corps had been dreadfully outraged by the slaughter of colonel Grierson, and some of his associates' – when the garrison did surrender, he recalls providing a personal guard for its Loyalist commander, Thomas Brown, to avoid retaliation against him by the militia. Echoing his earlier comment about the

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[160] Daniel Morgan, 'Morgan to Greene, December 31, 1780' in *The Papers of Nathanael Greene, Volume 7, 26 December 1780 – 29 March 1781*, eds. Richard K. Showman, Dennis Michael Conrad, Roger N. Parks (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 30.
[161] Thomas Young, 'Memoir of Major Thomas Young' in *The Orion: A Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art, Volume 3*, ed William C. Richards (Athens and Penfield, GA: William Richards, 1843), 87 – 88.
[162] Brown, *Memoirs of Tarleton Brown*, 44.
[163] Lee, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department, Volume 2*, 94.

barbarity of the fighting, he wrote that 'in this quarter a war of extermination became the order of the day.'[164]

The comment was not without merit. Just before the attack on Augusta, Patriot captains Paddy Carr and Isaac Shelby attacked a force of Georgia Loyalists mustering under the command of Major Philip Dill. Carr in particular was a known 'Tory hunter' who had supposedly killed a hundred Loyalists personally and who eventually 'met his death at the hands of some descendants of the Tories whom he had offended.'[165] Carr and Shelby attacked the Loyalists at Brier Creek 'where they route Dill completely, killing a number of his adherents' before later striking a second Loyalist group and 'slaughtered them indiscriminately without any killed or wounded on our [the Patriot] side.'[166] These were only the latest deaths in Carr's career, added to a tally of men killed after laying down arms – 'prisoners were executed. Loyalists learned that a "Georgia parole" meant death.'[167]

The number of casualties and the killing of prisoners at engagement's like Hammond's Store, Fort Grierson and elsewhere were little removed from engagements like Waxhaws, but there were no Loyalist survivors well-placed to cry massacre in the aftermath. And while Waxhaws included prominent commanders such as Tarleton and Buford and marked a decisive end to the Charleston campaign, the killings at places like Briar Creek and Hammond's Store became just another footnote in the fighting in the south. Though engagements like Hammond's Store fulfil the criteria of massacre, it remains a little-known affair to this day, while the activities of the likes of Carr are so obscure that they are sometimes lost in the midst of the folklore that developed around southern violence during the nineteenth century.

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[164] Ibid, 115.
[165] 'Letters of Patrick Carr, Terror to British Loyalists, to Governors John Martin and Lyman Hall, 1782 and 1783' in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly, Volume 1, Number 4* (December 1917), 337.
[166] Samuel Beckaem, 'Captain Samuel Beckaem's Statement on the War in Georgia, 1778 – 1781,' in *Georgia Citizens & Soldiers of the American Revolution*, ed. Robert S. Davis Jr., (Southern Historical Press, Greenville, SC 1979), 169.
[167] Cashin, *The King's Ranger*, 131.

Sometimes dismissed by historians because of the small numbers of combatants involved, massacres like Haw River, King's Mountain and the numerous smaller routs like Hammond's Store and Fort Grierson had a decisive impact on British operations in the south.

Such massacres had themselves been fuelled by Waxhaws, 'thus enraged passions and cries of Rebels on many a southern battlefield of "Tarleton's Quarters" and "Remember Buford!" as they retaliated against helpless Tory militiamen and executed them, most notably at Hammond's Store and Pyle's massacre.'[168] The effect of this brutalising campaign broke the will of many Loyalists and encouraged those with wavering loyalties to try to avoid the struggle. As Carpenter acknowledges:

> The real damage to the royal cause was psychological. With the destruction of North Carolina Loyalist forces at Ramsour's Mill, King's Mountain, and now Pyle's Massacre, one can understand the reluctance of locals to support the army… Conversely, local Patriots had reason to become more active and support the rebellion.[169]

Into Virginia

Major defeats such as King's Mountain, Cowpens and Pyle's massacre all combined with the continual violence to fatally undermine British attempts to restore Crown authority. The frequency of massacres added to pyrrhic victories like Guilford Courthouse ultimately helped to pushed Cornwallis into launching an initially unauthorised invasion of Virginia in May 1781, thus triggering the final engagements of the war's most decisive phase. He raided through the colony while playing cat-and-mouse with local Patriot forces commanded by Lafayette. The following description by Jefferson could have been written by a great number of plantation owners and propertied colonists in either the Carolinas or Virginia between 1780 and 1781, and gives a good sense of the scale of destruction wreaked by the British campaign:

[168] Buchanan, *The Road To Charleston*, 23.
[169] Carpenter, *Southern Gambit*, 196.

> [Cornwallis] destroyed all my growing crops of corn and tobacco, he burned all my barns, containing the same articles of last year, having first taken what corn he wanted; he used, as was to be expected, all my stock of cattle, sheep, and hogs, for the sustenance of his army, and carried off all the horses capable of service; of those too young for service he cut the throats; he burned all the fences on the plantation, so as to leave it an absolute waste. He carried off about thirty slaves.[170]

Ironically given the popular view of Tarleton, one of Jefferson's letters also praised the British officer for showing restraint towards his mansion at Monticello during a raid designed to capture him.

Unable to bring Lafayette to battle, Cornwallis was eventually ordered to Yorktown by Clinton. By this point the depredations of Crown Forces had contributed to the escape of tens of thousands of enslaved peoples. Tarleton wrote that 'all the negroes, men, women, and children, upon the approach of any detachment of the King's troops, thought themselves absolved from all respect to their American masters, and entirely released from servitude: Influenced by this idea, they quitted the plantations, and followed the army.'[171] In Tarleton's mind, likely influenced by his anti-abolitionist prejudices, this 'proved detrimental to the King's troops, and occasioned continual dispute about property of this description.'[172] Ultimately 'between four thousand and five thousand bedraggled blacks of all ages followed General Cornwallis's army across Virginia' to Yorktown. [173]

The arrival of Washington and the commencement of the Continental Army's siege spelled disaster not only for Crown Forces, but for these thousands of escapees who had liberated themselves. A little over two weeks into the siege Cornwallis decided on a course of action that was as cruel as it was militarily expedient. Unable to ration enough food for the embattled garrison, and worried about the spread of diseases such as smallpox, he had the

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[170] "From Thomas Jefferson to William Gordon, 16 July 1788," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed April 11, 2019, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-13-02-0266. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 13, *March–7 October 1788*, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956, pp. 362–365.]
[171] Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781*, 92.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 150.

thousands of camp followers that looked to him for safety turned out into the no man's land between the Yorktown defences and Washington's lines. Hessian officer Johann Ewald wrote in his diary on October 14 1781:

> I would just as soon forget to record a cruel happening. On the same day of the enemy assault, we drove back to the enemy all of our black friends, whom we had taken along to despoil the countryside. We had used them to good advantage and set them free, and now, with fear and trembling, they had to face the reward of their cruel masters.[174]

More so than at any other time during the war, a large part of the Patriot forces at Yorktown – perhaps as many as a quarter of those who fought during the siege – were black.[175] Despite this, few of those turned away by Cornwallis could expect anything approaching decent treatment. Most of those who did not perish from exposure or smallpox were re-enslaved. The blacks employed militarily by the British received the same fate. Jill Lepore describes how 'the 2000 black soldiers under Cornwallis's command who had survived the siege… trudged through swamps and forests in the hopes of reaching a British warship… they suffered from exhaustion; they suffered from hunger; they suffered from disease. Of thirty people who escaped Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, fifteen died of smallpox.'[176]

Ultimately it has been estimated that between 'eighty thousand to one hundred thousand black slaves'[177] seized their freedom over the course of the Revolutionary War, with a figure of about 20,000 successfully joining the exodus at the conflict's end. It has been described as 'the largest emancipation in American history before Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.'[178] In defiance of the tens of thousands of bids for freedom, white slave owners, including George Washington, spent months following Yorktown's surrender recapturing the formerly enslaved peoples scattered along the Virginia coast, and as late as 1786 people calling

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[174] Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War*, ed. Joseph Tustin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 335.
[175] Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists*, 175.
[176] JLepore *These Truths,* 104.
[177] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 150.
[178] Lepore *These Truths,* 102.

themselves ‘the King of England’s soldiers’ who ‘had been trained to arms by the British during the siege of Savannah’ were militarily resisting re-enslavement near the Savannah river.[179]

Their fate was a sorry indictment of British efforts in the south, which had ultimately come apart due to a lack of clear operational objectives, a failure to appreciate the nature of the societies they were engaging with and, perhaps most decisive of all, a desire among mid-ranking officers to either actively punish the colonists or overlook the actions of those seeking to do so. The Patriot atrocity narrative had been given free reign following Waxhaws, and ultimately the British were unable to find either a military or political answer to acts of massacre.

The Bloody Scout

The war in the south in 1780 and 1781 bore many similarities to the conflict waged along the colonial frontier. Fighting was frequent and small-scale – in South Carolina alone, for example, there were over three hundred recorded skirmishes and battles fought over the two years of major British occupation, usually involving between a few dozen and a few hundred men.[180] This is without including the murder of individuals or families by one side or the other.

As on the frontier, command and control was usually heavily decentralised. Bands of militia and volunteers were led by those with the greatest popularity or social ranking in their local community, and ‘units were fluid in their composition as men came and went according to their own self-interests, unencumbered by the rigors of traditional military discipline.’[181] The consequences of such a system have already been witnessed in the

[179] Sidney Kaplan and Emma Nogrady Kaplan, ‘Bearers of Arms: Patriot and Tory’ in *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in US Black Men’s History and Masculinity, Volume 1*, eds. Darlene Cark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 198.
[180] ‘The Known Battles & Skirmishes in South Carolina’ accessed online at https://www.carolana.com 14/06/2018.
[181] Graves, *Backcountry Revolutionary*, 57.

perpetration of frontier massacres such as Gnadenhutten. Bloodshed between neighbours was also a frequent motif during fighting – it has been suggested that the previously mentioned practice of Loyalists adopting Native dress and warpaint was to disguise them from their neighbours and reduce the danger of retaliation for massacres and atrocities. In the south however such measures weren't taken, and vengeance for violent acts perpetuated the destructive cycle that hampered British efforts at restoring Crown control in the colonies.

The south's similarity to the American frontier in the third phase of the war is further emphasised by how divorced much of the fighting was from the central war efforts of either side. While the fortunes of the campaigns of the Cherokee or the Iroquois rose and fell seemingly in near-isolation from the efforts of the likes of Howe, Clinton and Cornwallis further east, so the efforts of Loyalist commanders in the south frequently seemed divorced from Cornwallis's campaigns throughout the Carolinas and Virginia. And just as the fall of Yorktown had little impact on the efforts of Natives and Loyalists fighting on the frontier, so it failed to impact the so-called Tory War that by that point was raging in both Carolinas. The independent nature of this struggle is most clearly displayed by the "Bloody Scout" that was conducted by Loyalist Major William Cunningham in November 1781.

Cunningham originally served in the Continental Army, but was flogged and discharged for insubordination. After returning home to South Carolina and discovering his disabled brother had been beaten to death by a prominent local Patriot, he enlisted in a Loyalist regiment, surviving the battle of King's Mountain. Following a clash with Thomas Sumter's Patriots he mounted a campaign through the Carolina backcountry in late 1781.

In November that year he and his Loyalist band managed to catch and surround a force of Patriot militia at Cloud's Creek in Ninety-Six District. [182] After brief resistance the Patriots attempted to surrender, however,

[182] Accounts variously give the date of the massacre as November 7 or 17.

Cunningham 'at a meeting of his officers, advised and ordered the massacre of the whole party… One man, Bartley Bledsoe, was spared as a compensation shown to Henry Etheredge a few months before. All the others were butchered.'[183] While the later pensions claims of other survivors show that not all but one of the Patriot force were killed, their accounts make it clear that 'nearly all his [Patriot Captain Sterling Turner's] men were killed' and that 'Cunningham and his party in November 1781 attack [sic] and murdered Captain Turner and his company.' [184] [185] From a party of 'about thirty in number' all but a few 'were slaughtered as they stood.'[186]

Cunningham's rampage was just beginning. Southern folklore insists that he went on to hunt down and kill his former Patriot captain, John Caldwell, though the aunt of a Patriot Colonel, Martha Campbell, claimed to be present 'at the time the Loyalists killed Capt. Caldwell and that Major William Cunningham was not present but came up shortly afterwards and blamed his men very much for killing Capt. Caldwell.'[187]

Whether or not Cunningham did kill Caldwell, he next struck at another unsuspecting Patriot force commanded by Colonel Joseph Hayes encamped at Edgehill Station (sometimes called Hayes' Station). After being cornered in a small block house, the Patriots attempted to surrender:

> Cunningham immediately hanged Hayes and another man… the pole broke, and Cuningham [sic], drawing his sword, slew the half-strangled men with his own hand. This he justified himself in doing, because of alleged cruelties by Hayes to women and children… Being told of the presence of one Cook, who, it was charged, had with Ritchie and Moore whipped his

[183] John Bennett Boddie, *Virginia Historical Genealogies* (Baltimore, MA: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1990), 11 – 12.
[184] James Eidson, 'Pension Application of James Eidson S17939 f26SC', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 14/06/2018.
[185] Abraham Elledge, 'Pension Application of Abraham Elledge S10625 f12SC', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 14/06/2018.
[186] Edward McCrady, *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution 1780 – 1783* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1902), 472 – 473.
[187] Jabez W. H. Johnson, 'Notice of a Review of "Curwen's Journal," &c.' in *The Southern and Western Literary Messenger and Review, Volume 13* (Richmond, VA: Macfarlane & Fergusson, 1847), 428.

> brother to death, Cuningham ordered him out from the rest and slew him with his sword… And all who had rendered themselves obnoxious in any way to the Tories were slain without mercy. Only two of the party fell in the action; fourteen were deliberately cut to pieces after their surrender.[188]

Though most contemporary accounts don't give the bloody specifics about Cunningham that appear in later retellings, they agree that Hayes 'was taken prisoner by a party of Tories who were commanded by one Cunningham and hung' and that 'Hayes was the Colonel in Command and was murdered at Hayes' Station' by 'Tories under William Cunningham.' [189] [190] Writing in 1784 to the governor of South Carolina, judge Aedanus Burke related the prevailing contemporary account of Hayes' Station:

> The Americans had no sooner marched out & laid down their Arms, but the British seized Colo. Hayes, & with the Capitulation in his hand, pleading the terms of it & begging for Mercy, they hanged him to the limb of a tree & then fired a Bullet thro' him. Captn. Williams the second in Command, was treated in the same manner. After which Cunningham, with his Own hands slew some of the prisoners & desired his men to follow him example. A most cruel slaughter of the prisoners ensued; nineteen of them were butchered.[191]

Sources again debate the actual number of those killed – usually fourteen or nineteen – but it is clear that Cunningham had once again set about killing defenceless men. After the massacre at Hayes Station he continued to persecute and kill local Patriots, until a large force of militia led by Andrew Pickens was mobilised to stop him. Cunningham's band broke apart and escaped to Charleston.

The Bloody Scout showed the desire of certain Loyalists to continue to strike at their Patriot neighbours in the south long after the British Army had moved

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[188] Boddie, *Virginia Historical Genealogies*, 474 – 475.
[189] Samuel Boyd, 'Pension Application of Samuel Boyd W9737 Isabella Boyd f58SC', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 14/06/2018.
[190] Henry Pitts, 'Pension Application of Henry Pitts S7316 f34SC', *Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements*, accessed online at http://revwarapps.org/ 14/06/2018.
[191] Aedanus Burke in *Backcountry Revolutionary*, ed. William T. Graves (Lugoff, SC: Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution Press, 2012), 143 – 144.

on and been defeated. This desire – and the massacres spawned by it – had grown apart from any specifics war aims imagined by the ministry in London. Raids like the Bloody Scout perpetuated the cycle of massacres that the return of British forces had unleashed. As on the frontier, it was a war that raged independent of the main campaigns of generals like Washington and Cornwallis, but unlike on the frontier, it had direct consequences for both commanders in question. The lawless bloodshed in the south had ultimately proven ungovernable for the British.

Massacres were vital in shaping how the war was fought in the south more than anywhere else. The killings of Waxhaws, King's Mountain and Haw River combined with the numerous, less publicised atrocities like Piney Bottom, Briar's Creek and Hayes' Station and many more to turn the tide of the war in the south, ensuring that Britain's final large-scale military gamble ended in failure. The violent civil conflict that some British officers chose to indulge rather than curtail caused the degeneration of an already fraught society, with bloodshed reaching heights that were never matched for such a sustained period elsewhere during the conflict. During Cornwallis's campaigns he fought only two major pitched battles, at Camden and Guilford Courthouse, and both engagements involved no more than around 6,100 and 6,700 combatants respectively. During the northern campaigns battles such as Long Island, Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth saw between 20,000 and 30,000 troops engaged, yet despite this battlefield casualties in the south in 1780 and 1781 still accounted for 'nearly one-fifth of all battlefield deaths of the *entire* American war, and nearly one-third of all battlefield wounded.'[192] The sustained violence generated by near-constant small-scale skirmishes, ambushes and massacres reaped a fearsome body count, one that bled Britain's efforts to halt the rebellion dry.

British policy makers consistently stopped short of advocating a campaign of explicit repression against the colonists, and the result was a strategy that was out of step, not designed deliberately to brutalise the Carolinas, but

[192] Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 309.

unable and unwilling to check officers who felt harsher measures were warranted. The British ministry lamented its inability to control actions on the ground ever more bitterly towards the end of the war. The reluctance of high-ranking officers to serve in North America at the outbreak of the conflict now seemed prescient. Lord George Germain wrote that:

> The great mischief 'complained of in the prosecution of this war is that relaxation of discipline which disgraces the army and had alienated the affections of the inhabitants from the Royal cause. Plunder has been the object, and in the pursuit of it no distinction has been made between the well and the ill affected. This grievance cries aloud for redress.[193]

Germain's further writings betray regret at Britain's war policy, and the slender hope that fear of military governance and distrust towards France would eventually lead rebelling Americans back into a harmonious relationship with Great Britain. Ultimately the indiscipline of the British Army had damaged such hopes beyond repair. From the opening engagements of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill, the regular soldiery had showed antipathy and frequent distain towards the colonists. Such a 'lack of respect for Americans as soldiers could easily have been paralleled by lack of respect for American civilians and their property,' an issue that had boiled over on several occasions as the war progressed. [194]

Massacres distilled the nature of the final phase of the war in the southern colonies - confused, vicious, fratricidal, creating a spiral of violence that the higher echelon commands of both sides could not hope to control. Such engagements showed passive Loyalists that the British government could not protect them, and that the safety offered by the British Army was wholly conditional on their physical presence, a presence that would inevitably be removed one way or another. In the army's absence violence swept like wildfire, leading to massacres that further eroded the Crown's control. Fighting at King's Mountain and the massacre of Pyle's men tore the heart

[193] George Germain in *Lord George Germain*, ed. Alan Chester Valentine (Wotton-under-Edge: Clarendon Press, 1962), 441.
[194] Stephen Conway, '"The Great Mischief Complain'd of' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 378.

from the Loyalist militia and broke the already wavering spirit of those whole had survived and endured after the failed Loyalist efforts of 1776. The 'news of [Pyle's] massacre… chilled Cornwallis's efforts to recruit Loyalist militia' and essentially guaranteed the failure of the most integral element of Britain's southern strategy – the belief that the colonists would rally to the royal standard and help re-establish a functioning British presence in North America outside of Canada, New York and the Floridas.'[195] Massacres during the southern campaign, perpetrated by both sides, ended this hope and firmly accelerated the war towards its conclusion.

[195] Walker, *The Battles of Kings Mountain and Cowpens*, 113.

Conclusion: Fort Griswold

> There was hard fighting, and shocking slaughter, and much blood spilt… Our ground was drenched with human gore; our wounded and dying could not have any attendance, while each man was almost hopeless of his own preservation.[1]

On September 6 1781, as the Connecticut town of New London burned, across the Thames River Crown Forces were storming the defensive works at Fort Griswold. Built earlier in the war to protect privateers operating out of New London, Griswold was well-constructed but had been left undermanned and undersupplied. In September it became a target for a Crown raid designed to take New London and divert Washington's attention away from Cornwallis's stricken army in Virginia.

While the expedition's commander, Benedict Arnold, seized supplies in the town and then put it to the torch (claiming the latter act as an accident), a detachment consisting primarily of the regulars of the 40th and 54th Regiments of Foot under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Eyre landed on the eastern bank of the river Thames and proceeded to Fort Griswold, where a scratch force of militia under Lieutenant Colonel William Ledyard had been assembled. Eyre summoned the fort to surrender twice, the second time threatening no quarter should he be forced to storm the defences. Ledyard refused both sets of terms.

The British launched a frontal attack; 'in a solid column… they rushed furiously and simultaneously to the assault of the southwest bastion and the opposite sides.'[2] Grapeshot initially stymied the charge, but the regulars pressed on with a two-pronged offensive, one led by Eyre and the other by his subordinate, Major William Montgomery. During the attack a militia sergeant, Stephen Hempstead, related how 'a shot cut the halyards of the

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[1] Rufus Avery, 'Narrative of Rufus Avery' in *Narrative of Jonathan Rathbun, With Accurate Accounts of the Capture of Groton Fort, the Massacre that Followed, and the Sacking and Burning of New London* eds. Rufus Avery and Stephen Hempstead (New London, CN: Charles Allyn, 1840), 24 – 25.

[2] Stephen Hempstead, 'Narrative of Stephen Hempstead' in *The Battle of the Groton Heights: A Collection of Narratives, Official Reports, Records, &c., of the Storming of Fort Griswold, and the Burning of New London*, ed. William W. Harris (New London: 1870), 28.

flag [flying over the fort], and it fell to the ground, but was instantly remounted on a pike pole. This accident proved fatal to us, as the enemy, supposed it had been stuck by its defenders.'[3] The British, believing that they had been lured in by the garrison feigning surrender, redoubled the attack. Eyre was soon wounded and his column faltered, but Montgomery's succeeded in gaining a redoubt to the east of the fort and then storming the ditch and palisade beyond. Montgomery was himself killed in hand-to-hand fighting as the regulars sought to take the artillery embrasures and hack apart the palisade. The attack continued, and the men of the 40th Foot were able to capture one of the fort's gates and haul it open for Eyre's column, that had been stalled outside.

Rufus Avery, one of the young militia defenders, later wrote that 'we might suppose the loss of their commanders might have dismayed them, but they had proceeded so far, and the excitement and determination on slaughter was so great, they could not be prevented.'[4] Once the gates were hauled open he described how 'the enemy had every chance to wound and kill every man.'[5] He stated that Ledyard offered his surrendered, however:

> The enemy had a fair opportunity to massacre us… after we have fought and bled, and availed nothing, to yield to be massacred by the boasting enemy, "tries men's hearts!" Our ground was drenched with human gore… Now I saw the enemy mount the parapets like so many madmen, all at once seemingly. They swung their hats around, and then discharged their guns into the fort, and those who had not fallen by ball, they began to massacre with sword and bayonet.[6]

He went on to describe how Ledyard was murdered by the British officer he was surrendering to, and how the regulars 'killed and wounded every man they possibly could… one mad looking fellow put his bayonet to my side, swearing "by Jesus he would skipper me!" I looked him earnestly in the face and eyes, and begged him to have mercy… he put his bayonet three times

[3] Ibid.
[4] Avery, 'Narrative of Rufus Avery' in *Narrative of Jonathan Rathbun,* 24.
[5] Ibid, 25.
[6] Ibid, 25 – 26.

into me… I think no scene ever exceeded this for *continued* and barbarous massacre after surrender.'[7]

Hempstead echoed Avery's account, writing later that 'never was a scene of more brutal wanton carnage witnessed… the bayonet was "freely used," even on those who were helplessly wounded and in the agonies of death. I recollect Capt. William Seymour, a volunteer from Hartford, had thirteen bayonet wounds.' He stated that prior to the British forces breaking into the fort the defenders had suffered six killed and eighteen wounded, but that the final tally following the massacre was eighty-five killed and forty-five wounded.[8]

Command and Control and the Perpetration of Massacre

The bloodshed only ceased when the British realised that by continuing to fire into men trying to surrender so close to the fort's magazine they were risking an explosion that would kill them all. Avery went so far as to state that an accidental detonation 'must, before this, have been the case, had not the ground and every thing been wet with human blood.'[9] Interestingly, Avery describes the British firing as being conducted in platoons – 'they discharged three platoons as I crossed before them at this time'[10] Earlier in his narrative, describing the attack on the fort, he also references the British using platoon firing – 'then they started for the fort, a part of them in platoons, discharging their guns.'[11] Hempstead corroborates this claim, adding that during the massacre after the fort had fallen 'the enemy were still firing on us in platoons.'[12]

The point of interest here is less that the British continued to shoot their surrendering victims, and more that they did so using platoon volleys. Such a

[7] Ibid, 28.
[8] Hempstead, 'Narrative of Stephen Hempstead' in *The Battle of the Groton Heights*, 30 – 31.
[9] Avery, 'Narrative of Rufus Avery' in *Narrative of Jonathan Rathbun*, 29.
[10] Ibid, 18.
[11] Ibid, 14.
[12] Hempstead, 'Narrative of Stephen Hempstead' in *The Battle of the Groton Heights*, 30.

method of delivering fire was difficult at the best of times, and far more so during the chaos of battle, let alone the aftermath of a storming action where the most senior officers had been killed or wounded. Even with officers still commanding and with less carnage all around, it was common for platoon firing in the eighteenth century to quickly break down, as happened at Dettingen in 1743.[13] Furthermore, platooning was a tactic rarely employed by the British in North American during the Revolutionary War. Such fire discipline was best used against opposing regulars in close formation in the open field, a set of circumstances that British soldiers rarely encountered during the revolution. From the very beginning, in actions such as Lexington, Concord and the closing stages of Bunker Hill, British infantry preferred one or two full volleys followed by bayonet assaults to route Patriots from their positions, and 'when British infantry did become involved in sustained firefights, it is most likely that fire control devolved entirely to the officers commanding companies… if these officers and their sergeants did not closely supervise the loading and levelling of weapons, the men probably did not execute these actions well.'[14]

Given the documented difficulties in platoon firing the fact that it was employed to gun down surrendering Patriots at Fort Griswold heavily implies that a number of the regulars there had maintained their discipline and were still under orders from their junior officers and NCOs. This also means that said officers were responsible for ordering their men to fire on the fort's defeated defenders, an act of cold-blooded execution. Given accounts mention both these platoon volleys and more random bayonetings (both Avery and Hempstead describe being stabbed while surrendering by British soldiers roving through the fort) it makes sense that some regulars were running amok while others continued to remain under orders. The fact that one group of British soldiers had stormed the walls while the other had been let in through the gate would seem to account for this, with Avery stating that

[13] David Blackmore, *Destructive and Formidable: British Infantry Firepower 1642 – 1765* (Croydon, UK: Frontline Books), 106.
[14] Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only,* 215.

he saw the regulars who had been outside the gate 'marching into the fort and formed into a solid column.'[15] Therefore, while the disorganised portion of the assault that had stormed the walls went wild with the bayonet, this section remained formed up and appear to have been ordered by officers and NCOs to discharge volleys into surrendering men.

The Loyalist New York periodical, *Rivington's Gazette*, makes no mention of such cold-blooded killing, but instead published an account of the fort's storming which emphasised the garrison's supposed striking of the colours and then return to arms to explain away any accounts of a massacre:

> When the troops got into the ditch the rebels struck the flag and ceased firing, until they pulled out some of the stakes and mounted on the range, when the rebels began to play their guns from the bastions, and attempted to defend their ramparts, but the valor of our troops prevailed, and the rebels fled to the casemates of the fortress, and some of them fired through the loop-holes; but the doors being burst open they were compelled to beg mercy, which being the darling attribute of Britons even to a fault, they spared the catiffs.[16]

Benedict Arnold's official report to Sir Henry Clinton also makes no mention of a massacre, stating only that the fort was stormed by the regulars 'with fixed bayonets through the embrasures, where they were opposed with great obstinacy by the garrison with long spears [probably naval boarding pikes].'[17]

The massacre at Fort Griswold stemmed from three primary factors. Firstly, the storming cost the British regulars dear, and saw the deaths of several prominent officers. Secondly, as we have seen throughout the war the regulars already possessed a strong antipathy towards the Patriots, especially the militia. Both regiments involved in the attack, the 40th and 54th Foot, were experienced outfits who had seen service during the brutal

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[15] Avery, 'Narrative of Rufus Avery' in *Narrative of Jonathan Rathbun*, 15.
[16] 'From Rivington's Royal Gazette (New York)' in *The Battle of the Groton Heights: A Collection of Narratives, Official Reports, Records, &c., of the Storming of Fort Griswold, and the Burning of New London*, ed. William W. Harris (New London: 1870), 57 – 58.
[17] Benedict Arnold, 'Brigadier-General Arnold's Report to Sir Henry Clinton. Plum Island, Sept. 8th, 1781' in *The Battle of the Groton Heights: A Collection of Narratives, Official Reports, Records, &c., of the Storming of Fort Griswold, and the Burning of New London*, ed. William W. Harris (New London: 1870), 63.

northern campaigns of 1776 – 1778. Thirdly, the accidental striking of the fort's colours seems to have deluded some of the attackers into thinking the enemy had feigned surrender and continued the fight, a trick the Patriots had employed before and a fact that seemed to be confirmed when the defenders of one of the fort's bastions continued to resist after the rest of the fort had surrendered. All of this contributed to a massacre of Griswold's defenders after they were overrun, but the reports of platoon firing by the regulars into surrendering men appears to indicate that they were still acting under the order of some officers and all not running rampant, implying said officers were deliberately snubbing the Patriot surrender. This conforms to the previous actions of company-level British officers in incidents such as the Baylor massacre, where they actively encouraged their men to kill surrendering Patriots.

As with Waxhaws and a host of other bloody encounters, the action at Fort Griswold and the torching of New London had a direct, tangible effect on Revolutionary War combatants, and was used as a rally cry by Patriot forces in the final phase of the war. At Yorktown 'the cry of the Americans as they mounted to the assault was, "remember New London."'[18] Later histories asserted that 'Lafayette, with the sanction of Washington, ordered the assailants to "remember Fort Griswold," where some of their country had been inhumanly butchered a few months before.'[19] The attackers intended to 'put every man of the redoubt to death,' [20] a threat they didn't carry through with – 'the continental soldiers could not or would not execute the command on prisoners who begged their lives on their knees.' [21] As massacres continued on the peripheries of the conflict, at the stroke of the decisive engagement of the war, mercy prevailed.

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[18] George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* (New York, Derby and Jackson, 1860), 241.
[19] Benson J. Lossing, *The American Historical Record, Volume 3* (Philadelphia, John E. Potter, 1874), 460.
[20] George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington* (New York, Derby and Jackson, 1860), 242.
[21] Samuel Adams Drake, *Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875), 428.

Massacres as Negotiators

Massacres were used throughout the Revolutionary War to discredit, dehumanise and cow opponents while motivating sympathy and support from those who identified with the cause of the victims. Unsurprisingly, they continued to be used as the war drew to an end. Even as massacres still continued on the frontier and in the south, peace talks between Britain and her enemies opened in Paris on March 5 1782, twelve years to the day since the Boston massacre. The inauspicious date aligned well with a section of the strategy pursued by the American delegation. While attending the talks, part of the 'centrepiece of the American peace commissioners' negotiations' involved highlighting 'the use of Indians to massacre the colonists; the plundering and murder of colonial merchants, farmers, women and children, numbered at forty thousand; the incitement of insurrections among domestic servants (slaves).'[22] In doing so they hoped to influence British public opinion as thoroughly as they had the colonial public, and ultimately weaken the position of the British delegation when it came down to negotiations.

It immediately became apparent that two of the greatest obstacles to the success of peace talks between Britain and America would be the treatment of Loyalists and the quest by both sides for compensation over damage to personal property. The Crown initially demanded that all property taken during the conflict be returned along with damage reparations. In response the American party demanded that Britain return all the "property" it had stolen – particularly slaves. This was deemed unacceptable by Britain, and it ultimately fell to the discretion of individual States to recompense the Loyalists from their former colonies.

The use of the phrase massacre as an important emotive tool during these negotiations is spelled out by how frequently it appeared as recriminations flew across the Atlantic in the closing months of the war. In 1782 a group of Loyalists from South Carolina sent a petition to Lord Germain listing three

[22] Mulford, 'Benjamin Franklin's Savage Eloquence' in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 513.

hundred individuals who had been ‘massacred in this province’ and claiming that the actual number of those killed by the Patriots was three times as high. They desired restitution.[23] On the other side, the State of New York initially answered Loyalist claims over the confiscation of property by stating that ‘the adherents to the King of Great Britain… have cruelly massacred, without regard to age or sex, many of our citizens, and wantonly desolated and laid waste a great part of this State.’[24] Massacres continued to yield valuable propaganda benefits long after their occurrence, so much so that atrocities were even invented with fabricated evidence to put pressure on negotiations.

In 1782 Benjamin Franklin published an entirely false newspaper report from his personal press at Passy, in France. It invented a New England militia captain named Gerish, a man who had come into the possession of some British packs and was seemingly:

> Struck with Horror to find among the Packages, 8 large ones containing SCALPS of our unhappy Country-folks, taken in the three last Years by the Senneka Indians from the Inhabitants of the Frontiers... and sent by them as a Present to Col. Haldimand, Governor of Canada, in order to be by him transmitted to England.[25]

Franklin added a further fake letter from an unnamed British agent which offered more grim descriptions for each set of scalps, stating if they were taken from 'Farmers, killed in their houses,' or 'Prisoners burnt alive' or 'Women... knocked down dead' or even 'little infants Scalps... ript out of their Mothers' bellies.'[26]

The reason Franklin created the false reports – besides his love for well-made hoaxes – was to apply pressure to the British ministry mainly over the

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[23] Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), 211.
[24] ‘Appendix’ in *The Claim of the American Loyalists Reviewed and Maintained Upon Incontrovertible Principles of Law and Justice*, ed. Joseph Galloway (London: G. and T. Wilkie, 1788), 136 – 137.
[25] Benjamin Franklin 'Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle' in *Memories of the Life and Writings of B. F.*, ed William Temple Franklin (London: Henry Colburn, 1818), p. 338.
[26] Ibid, p. 339.

sticking point of reparations. In short, he wished to harness the atrocity narrative once again to 'bring the horrors of Indian warfare home to the minds of the rulers of England.'[27] The initial targets in the scheme were 'middling-level people' who 'would have found British-sponsored Indian scalping… shocking beyond belief.'[28] Once the story had been disseminated by the Whiggish factions of British society it would then take traction in the British press and help to damage the British government's reputation and weaken its hand in the midst of negotiations. Franklin had determined that 'it was time to make a last stand against British atrocities, in an effort to convince Britons… of the cruelty of the treatment of Britons in North America and the essential importance of reparations.'[29]

Franklin's writings did indeed receive indignation and circulation within Britain's press, but ultimately proved even more popular in the colonies, where it added another example to the list of Britain's imperial brutalities during the revolution. The account remained popular, being 'reprinted with great frequency before 1820' and experiencing 'a serious spike in its reprintings around the era of the War of 1812.'[30] During that conflict it was used as the basis for at least one article about the 'British Massacres' that had occurred during the American Revolution.[31]

The massacres of the Revolutionary War became tools that could be used directly in the political interplay between Britain and American at the war's end. More than that, they continued to serve a political purpose right into the nineteenth century, whether agitating for war against Native American tribes or Great Britain. This shows how their importance – and utility – went beyond something as basic as attracting recruits or cowing an enemy during war-time. And while the memories of British and Loyalist victims of massacres did

[27] James Parton, *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 2* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1864), 436.
[28] Mulford, 'Benjamin Franklin's Savage Eloquence' in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 505.
[29] Ibid, 515.
[30] Ibid, 518.
[31] See page 155.

not remain concentrated or coherent except in small Canadian enclaves, for both Native American tribes and the citizens of the new United States, recollections of suffering endured. Acts of massacre remained vivid and potent enough to fuel not only fresh violence but also influenced political decisions for decades after the revolution had ended.

Massacres Memorialised

While the revolution's massacres continued to be turned to political ends, they would not have attracted the same resonance were they not likewise enshrined – both literally and metaphorically – in the consciousness of future Americans. Though historians of the war generally avoided emphasising incidents of massacre, in popular and local memory they remained. The Fort Griswold massacre serves as an example. Interest in the subject was kept alive by accounts such as Avery's and Hemptstead's, both of which were written decades after the end of the war. A memorial obelisk was erected on Groton Heights between 1825 and 1829 by the local Groton Monument Association 'in memory of the brave Patriots, who fell in the massacre at Fort Griswold, near this spot, on the 6th of Sept. A.D. 1781.' [32] During the dedication ceremony 'a few of the survivors of the massacre were present.'[33]

The monument was significant as one of only three to have been built on the site of a Revolutionary War engagement and dedicated to the regular rank-and-field soldiery in the near aftermath of the conflict. Before 1830 the only other large, permanent memorials to the war's regular Patriots were to be found at Lexington and near Paoli's Tavern. The significance is clear – all three were the sites of massacres, all three memorials 'honoured soldiers as victims of, not participants in, violence. Their innocence proclaimed the justness of the patriot cause and the treacherousness of British tyranny.'[34]

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[32] William W. Harris, *The Battle of the Groton Heights: A Collection of Narratives, Official Reports, Records, &c., of the Storming of Fort Griswold, and the Burning of New London* (New London: 1870), 90.
[33] Francis Manwaring Caulkins, *The Stone Records of Groton* (Carlisle, MA: Applewood Books, 1903), 58.
[34] Thomas A. Chambers, *Memories of War: Visiting Battlegrounds and Bonefields in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 90.

These three were soon joined by monuments dedicated to other massacres – in 1832 the bones of those killed in the Wyoming Valley in 1778 were exhumed as part of a public event that included what the main ceremony described as 'venerable citizens, who were in the rank that faced the enemy on the memorable 3rd of July.'[35] Local newspapers printed emotive retellings of the massacre. The remains of those killed were reinterred a year later beneath a monument dedicated to the battle.

As the years passed and America drew closer to another fratricidal conflict, the number of memorials dedicated to the Revolutionary War continued to rapidly increase. Waxhaws was graced by a fifteen-foot obelisk in 1860 that 'honoured the American soldiers killed in that "bloody massacre."'[36] In Groton, the obelisk commemorating Griswold was heightened by seven feet and was joined, in 1854, by a monument dedicated to Colonel Ledyard, commemorating 'the burning of New London, the storming of Groton Fort, the massacre of the garrison and the slaughter of Ledyard, the brave commander of these posts who was slain by the conquerors with his own sword.'[37] At Crooked Billet a monument was erected to 'capt. John Downey and others who were cruelly slain on this ground in the struggle for American liberty.' The monument drew direct parallels between the revolutionary massacre, the War of 1812 and the Civil War, with a further inscription reading 'the Patriots of 1776 achieved our independence. Their successors established it in 1812. We are now struggling for its perpetuation in 1861. The Union must and shall be preserved.'

More monuments followed. One was dedicated to Captain William Foreman, the Patriot whose company had been massacred during a Native ambush in 1777 – the plaque was to the men 'slain by a band of ruthless savages – the *allies* of a *civilized* nation of Europe.'[38] Cherry Valley's monument was dedicated in front of a crowd of 10,000 people on August 15, 1878. Twenty

[35] James May, 'Address' in *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania, Volume 10*, ed. Samuel Hazard (Philadelphia: W. M. F. Geddes, 1832), 39.
[36] Ibid, 160.
[37] Caulkins, *The Stone Records of Groton*, 62.
[38] Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia*, 365.

years later an American historian proudly related a history of 'the settlers who, returning from their grand struggle for liberty, poor in worldly goods and broken in health, laid the second foundations of Cherry Valley' and were visited in 1783 by Washington, who spent one evening listening to 'the wild border tales.'[39] In 1906 a memorial plaque was also laid in the local Presbyterian church remembering, in part, some of those who 'were cruelly slain in the MASSACRE which scattered the flock, Nov. 11 1778.'[40]

In the same year as the dedication of the Cherry Valley monument in 1878 ongoing commemorative events also began to be held at the older Wyoming Monument, whose inscription declared that 'numerical superiority alone gave success to the invader, and wide-spread havoc, desolation and ruin, marked his savage and bloody footsteps through the Valley.' The Paoli monument, first erected in 1817, was described as having 'become very much injured and defaced' and was replaced by another in 1875 which recalled the event as 'the atrocious massacre.'[41] An oration during the new monument's dedication described to the audience 'the dreadful massacre, unparalleled by savagery or barbaric precedents.'[42] Little Egg Harbor was memorialised with a monument in 1894, as well as a plaque dedicated by the Society of Cincinnati 'to commemorate the massacre of a portion of the Legion commanded by Brigadier the General the Count Casimir Pulaski.' The massacre perpetrated by William Cunningham at Hayes' Station received a monument from the Henry Laurens Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which lists the names of those killed and declares that 'during the struggle for National Independence these fourteen gallant defenders of Liberty surrendered as prisoners of war and were massacred by Major William Cunningham and his Tories.' At Hancock's House, where sleeping militia were set upon by the Queen's Rangers, a stone and plaque

[39] John Sawyer, *History of Cherry Valley from 1740 to 1898* (Cherry Valley, NY: Gazette Print, 1898), 43 – 44.
[40] Swinnerton, *The Story of Cherry Valley*, 1.
[41] 'The Massacre at Paoli' in *Proceedings on the Occasion of the Dedication of the Monument on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Paoli Massacre* (West Chester, PA: F. S. Hickman, 1877), 3 – 5.
[42] Ibid.

laid in 1932 ‘by the patriotic order Sons of America of Salem County’ remembers ‘the Patriots massacred in the Hancock House.’

To save the location of the Baylor massacre from modern development – as well as to preserve the remains of some of its victims – part of the area that had once been Tappan was transformed in 1972 into a public park. Entitled the Baylor Massacre Park, it contains a number of plaques and stones, as well as information boards encouraging visitors to examine different contemporary accounts of the incident and consider its nature, on the one hand a highly successful military undertaking and, on the other, a ruthless massacre of near-defenceless men. The marker laid in the rededication in 1972 reads:

> In memory of American soldiers killed during the Revolutionary War in the 'Baylor Massacre' on September 28, 1778. Lt. Col. George Baylor's 3rd Regiment of Continental Dragoons took quarters for the night on several nearby farms. Tories betrayed their presence to a British force who surrounded the Dragoons during the night. A number of Americans were killed or wounded after they surrendered.

Memories of the revolution, particularly the memories ingrained by massacre and extreme violence, created a blood-bond in the minds of future American citizens between themselves and their perceived past. It proved especially potent during the antebellum, when the ‘increase in battlefield commemoration employed old rhetoric in new ways by using place as a legitimizing factor in sectional political rhetoric.’[43] In this sense the revolution’s massacres had an impact reaching far beyond the years of the war itself. Did those who first immortalised the early events of Lexington and Concord or the killings in Boston with articles, artwork and poetry anticipate the legacy they would help to create? Certainly their foremost objective – rousing their fellow colonists to war with Great Britain – was a successful endeavour. From the depositions collated by the Sons of Liberty in Boston in 1770 to General Gates’ letter to Burgoyne during the Saratoga campaign, from the publicised examination of the number of bayonet wounds suffered

[43] Chambers, *Memories of War*, 160.

by victims of the Baylor massacre to the cries of “remember Buford” throughout the South, the Patriots successfully harnessed a victim narrative that legitimised their political grievances against Britain and King George. A flurry of small-scale but violent British successes in 1777 and 1778 were offset entirely by the ability of the Patriots to delegitimise these victories by pointing out the more bloodthirsty mindset of British regular soldiers, an advantage that was further accentuated when killings did not – for whatever reason – always meet with full-scale reprisals. Counter-claims that surprise raids with few survivors and reliance on the bayonet were merely symptoms of a professional fighting force gained little traction with the colonial public, who had comparatively little first-hand experience of large-scale eighteenth-century warfare and the brutalities it entailed. Revolutionaries ‘presented such atrocities as part of a broader pattern of British excessive violence… British massacres thus became highly effective assets in the Patriots’ moral war: they helped them win the battle for the support of the American population while shaming Britain in the eyes of the world.’[44]

Massacres as Decisive Acts of War

Regarding acts of violence against defeated enemies or helpless non-combatants, the American Revolution was one of the most vicious conflicts either in North America or involving Great Britain in the eighteenth century. Soldiers and civilians on both sides and of all nationalities made note of its massacres and highlighted the often exceptionally antagonistic relationship between its combatants. Despite this, it is only in the last half century – and the previous decade in particular – that analysis of the war has started to acknowledge its bloody reality on a broader basis. Until then historians have too often been happy to enumerate the revolution’s violence on a case-by-case basis – even in the nineteenth century topics like Waxhaws, the Baylor massacre or Gnadenhutten were popular locally, but such events were discussed in isolation, held to be the exception and never used as a framework to properly contextualise the high levels of violence in evidence

[44] Hoock, *Scars of Independence,* 267.

throughout the war. These circumstances were accentuated by the fact that nineteenth-century American historians often wished to avoid tainting the increasingly hallowed memory of the Revolutionary War with a legacy of undue bloodshed. While the cause of liberty and independence had been well served by emphasising the atrocity narrative and lambasting British brutality during the war, after it there was no need to continue to highlight it beyond the limited remit of local history, memorialisation, and the occasional call to arms. Massacres were an expedient tool, not a field of study or an indicator of the revolution's realities. Washington's alleged comment to Thomas Mullett, that he would rather bury the memory of the war's atrocities than continue to recount them, seems prescient.

This thesis has set out to show that wartime massacres had a powerful effect on the military outcomes of the American Revolution. Research findings have shown how violence initially drove revolutionary sentiment. The killings at Boston in 1770 and later at Lexington and on the road to Cambridge in 1775 were harnessed by a powerful revolutionary propaganda machine and helped sweep the colonies towards open war with Britain. Lexington in particular highlights the dichotomy at the heart of many of the massacre claims made during the war – it took on the guise of massacre to influence public opinion, but became a battle when it best suited the historical memory of its participants. Following the onset of war the British military continually heightened the aggression of the conflict, especially through the years 1777 and 1778. Massacres like Paoli and Old Tappan proved the operational effectiveness of a cadre of elite British regiments, and while these influenced battlefield outcomes, such ostensible British successes had anything but the desired result. Unable to respond effectively in a direct military sense, the Patriots again made the most of their propaganda efforts, harnessing the atrocity narrative to bolster the revolution, while the British proved largely tone-deaf to the struggle for hearts and minds. Acts of massacre were also a driving force on the frontier, where deep racial divisions between colonists and Native Americans ensured a conflict that became increasingly ruthless. Often understated by broad studies of the Revolutionary War, frontier

massacres such as Cherry Valley diverted a great deal of Patriot manpower further east and refocussed priorities, while violence against Native American non-combatants, such as the Gnadenhutten massacre, emphasised the race aspect of the conflict and proved the basis for retaliatory campaigns by both sides. Unable to land a decisive blow and with the Patriot atrocity narrative succeeding in keeping the rebellion active, British hopes turned to the south at the close of 1779, but here again massacres and the complexities of racial antagonism would fatally undermine the efforts of Crown Forces. Waxhaws set the tone for Britain's Southern campaign and helped Patriot recruitment, while Pyle's massacre and King's Mountain broke the last of the North Carolina Loyalist militia and helped to ensure that gains made by the British regulars would not be turned into permanent successes.

The failure to acknowledge the violence inherent in the American Revolution has meant that there has been little appreciation for the pivotal role of massacres during the conflict. Even modern works such as Hoock's concern themselves more with a broad-brush treatment of violence at the expense of building a military understanding of the unique and pivotal impact of massacres. In almost every case the massacres described had an influence on the war that outweighed the numbers of both the perpetrators and the victims involved. Whether the killings were harnessed and propagandised to act as incentive or deterrent, massacres during the American Revolution were crucial to the war's progress and, at times, came to define it.

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